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SEPTEMBER, 1950 - VOL. 17 No. 1

18

*Edited by*  
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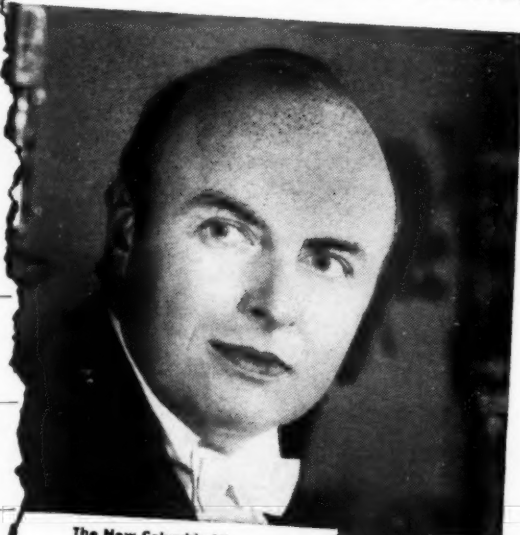
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## CONTENTS

Editorial Notes .....	1
Béla Bartok, Sidney Finkelstein .....	3
Mozart's "Idomeneo", A Review ..	9
Recent Books .....	11
LP Re-Issues .....	14
Record Notes and Reviews .....	15

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● Peter Hugh Reed, Editor: C. J. Luten, James Norwood, Associate Editors: Philip L. Miller, Anson W. Peckham, Harold C. Schonberg, Contributing Editors: Julius S. Spector, Art Editor.

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## Editorial Notes

CALL IT what you will, but the Battle of the Speeds seems the best name for it. It is an issue that has not been definitely decided. There is no question that the long-playing record, using a speed of 33 rpm, has been widely acclaimed. Reports from the east coast to the west coast inform us that LP sells best of all in most stores. In the past year, 45 rpm records have gained greatly in sales, especially in the popular field and the short classics. If you travel west, as a friend of ours recently did, you may discover as he did that 45 sales begin to rise around the Mississippi River and mount in the Rocky Mountain era, but by the time you reach the Pacific Coast you'll find LPs are the main drawing card. In the South and southwest, we are told, 45s are very popular, but LPs are also desired.

The library journal, *Notes*, in its June issue observed that the different speeds and new types of recording machines "each have advantages and disadvantages, and there is a good possibility that no one speed or type of apparatus will be able to dominate the field completely in the way that the 78 rpm discs did for so long." For, it is not even certain that the present buying public "will finally place its stamp of approval upon" any one form of recording. People will, if interested in recorded music, make arrangements one way or the other to play more than one speed. In the end, the majority will probably settle down to the form of recording that pleases them most of all. As the writer of the article in *Notes* says: "A variety of tools adapted to specific purposes is not necessarily an unwelcome prospect, but it may make life more complicated for those who must familiarize themselves with and constantly use new equipment."

Almost every month several readers write about speeds and their reactions to the dif-

ferent ones. The majority seem to have settled down to 33 rpm and admit they find it irksome to have to switch to another speed. To be sure, these readers are almost all primarily interested in serious music, and inasmuch as the long-playing disc has provided uninterrupted performance they are neglecting their old 78s. Far too many are buying inferior performances of musical works on LP and discarding their better 78 rpm counterparts.

When Columbia issued its first LP disc it started a ball rolling that has gained not only in momentum but in size. It looks very much like, in the long run, that the ball was like the tiny rock that started rolling at the top of the mountain, gaining momentum slowly but surely and new companions, and finally reached proportions which enabled it to overwhelm the village at the foot of the mountain.

### LP's Prestige

It has been pointed out in these pages what Columbia's LP disc has done for the record industry. It has developed a healthy competitive business and brought a lot of small companies into existence, some of which — it might be observed — are not making the most of a desirable situation. But that is another story. Someday, the poor productions, inferior recording and record surfaces, which have been fostered among record buyers by smaller companies, will react like boomerangs upon their sponsors. At the moment, the novelty of LP has swayed the greater buying public and many buy anything and everything. But even indiscriminate buyers learn their lessons in the long run — by trial and error.

The howl of protest from English reviewers against the so-called "Recital" and "Concert of Orchestral Music" programs has been spontaneous. This seems to be the only antipathy to the LP disc. It is an antipathy which may eventually be moderated once these critics are faced with the incontrovertible fact that there is a wide market for these records. Say what you will about these records, the fact remains the dividing line between selections allows the listener a leeway of playing any one or two items at any time. No one will argue against the assertion that such arbitrarily devised "programs" are best served by 45s or 78s, or 7" 33s. Yet, Columbia's

argument that "only one system is needed to give you all the advantages of new recording developments" remains a fact that intrigues the minds of the majority of record buyers today.

But the "Battle of the Speeds" goes on. Under a date line of August 7, 1950, Mr. Edward Wallenstein, president of Columbia Records, Inc., announced: "Having developed a better 45 rpm record, Columbia Records, Inc., will release two of its current popular hits on 45 rpm Microgroove records in several test markets. The two records are *Goodnight Irene*, recorded by Frank Sinatra and *Sometime*, recorded by the Mariners." This announcement is a highly interesting one which may provoke a lot of speculation. But coming from one of the shrewdest and wisest record men in the business, it gives us food for thought. One of the chief problems of 45s since their inception has been warpage, which has given some trouble with changers and created needle wear. If Columbia has "developed a better record" surely this disc solves the problem of warpage. We can believe that RCA Victor turned reluctantly to LPs and that Columbia now turns unwillingly to 45s. But the fact that there is a harvest to be reaped in both cases annuls any claims that either concern has capitulated to the other. Rather, both have surrendered to public demands. Where the most money will be made, in the long run, remains problematical.

The death of 78s is almost certain to come in time. But many 78s will never be replaced and the value of such records will eventually give them greater prestige. And this will not be among so-called promiscuous collectors but among discriminating listeners, musicians, and educators who realize the worth of interpretive excellence. Of course, there is the possibility at some distant point in the future that a lot of our valued 78s of older vintage may be re-recorded on LPs, but a loss of quality may result. So, no matter what happens, the original 78s will retain value.

\* \* \*

The opening of the fall music season brings to mind the fact that the record societies across country will be resuming their seasonal functions. The New York Society for Recorded Music has found a new and more desirable home, centrally located. It has also moved its meeting date up a day, from

(Continued on page 8)





# BELA BARTOK (1881-1945)

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## HIS MUSIC AND THE RECORDINGS

By Sidney Finkelstein\*

SINCE HIS DEATH in September 1945, Bela Bartok's reputation has steadily grown, so that now his musical compositions are among the most admired and studied of our time. Bartok issued no manifestos or announcements of new musical systems and made no claims to have discovered the pure musical art of the past or the new music of the future. Yet he is not only one of the greatest of 20th-century composers but also one of the great teachers and creative musical thinkers. Over and above his musical compositions, his services to the art of music are inestimable.

Had Bartok never written an original note, his collections and studies of Balkan folk music would have been sufficient to make his name remembered. They laid the basis for a more scientific approach to the body of folk music. They threw new light upon the origins of all music — the development of melody, polyphony, harmonic and rhythmic

patterns out of the most simple beginnings in the social life of humanity. It is impossible however to separate Bartok the musical thinker and scientist from Bartok the composer. It took the ear and mind of a great composer to realize the shallowness of what the 19th-century had considered to be "folk," to search out the true folk patterns, and to transcribe and analyze them as searchingly as he did. Of 19th-century composers, only Mussorgsky had a comparable feeling for the difference between folk music and the harmonically organized, fixed music (with bar-lines) heard in the cafes and in folk song recitals. In Mussorgsky, however, this feeling was more intuitive, as part of his own process of composition.

Bartok's career displays a modest desire to avoid the life of a "professional composer." The works for public concert performance are only a small part of his output, and most of them came in the last ten years of his life. The greater part of his work consists of music for instruction, collections of folk music, ar-

\*Mr. Finkelstein is a well known lecturer on modern music, an authority on modern jazz and the author of *Jazz — A People's Music* (Citadel Press).

rangements of folk music, and numerous short compositions, folk-inspired and designed either for amateur performance or for exploration into the ways in which folk motifs could be expanded into a musical idiom. This life-work is distinguished by great richness, breadth, and social-mindedness. Bartok's larger individual compositions, such as the quartets or the *Concerto for Orchestra*, are marked by the same breadth in such a way that they reflect a more rounded and many-sided human being than most of the compositions of our time.

Béla Bartok was born on March 25, 1881, in the small Hungarian town of Nagyszentmiklos, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His father, head of an agricultural school and himself a talented musician, died when the son was eight. The mother, in spite of struggle against poverty, was able to give Béla a musical education.

### Revolutionary Times

Hungary at this time was the scene of a seething movement for national independence. Bartok showed his sympathy with this movement when he deliberately chose to go to the conservatory in Budapest rather than to the far more celebrated one in Vienna. In Budapest he developed sufficiently remarkable qualities as a pianist to enable him to pursue the career of a virtuoso. He also wrote prolifically in symphony and chamber music forms, in which he assimilated the "advanced" musical idiom of his time — Liszt, Wagner, Brahms, and Richard Strauss. To some of these works he gave national patriotic programs, as in the case of his *Kossuth Symphony*, which annoyed the Austrian musicians because of its distortion of the Austrian national anthem. When the work was finally performed, Bartok took his bows dressed in national peasant costume.

During his middle twenties, Bartok made some grave decisions. One was not to become a concert pianist. Another was to break with the idea of becoming a composer, at least in the accepted academic forms. He seemed to feel that what he had learned was useless to him, and he had to learn music again from the ground up.

For the next fifteen years he wrote few works that could be described as ambitious concert compositions. He embarked upon what were to be his monumental studies of

Balkan folk song, and he also wrote many pieces for solo voice, violin, piano, and chorus that may be called an enchanting borderland between folk arrangements and free composition. At the same time he renounced the superficial nationalism of his youth, with its romantically patriotic attitudes, and dedicated himself to expressing his love of country on the far sounder basis of a knowledge of its people — the great mass of whom were peasants who lived in miserable poverty.

After the horror of the First World War of 1914-18, when Hungary won a relative independence, Bartok began to write more regularly in concert forms, although his works were of a highly experimental texture of harmony and timbre. The major part of his writing was still in small forms. He also taught at the conservatory and expanded his researches in folk music, partly in an official capacity. He complained bitterly at the meagre sums of money allotted to such studies in contrast to the amounts expended on armaments.

His folk studies took him beyond the borders of Hungary into the Balkan countries and even into Turkey and Arabia, where he discovered the source of many Balkan idioms. His studies led him to believe that Hungarian folk music owed its richness to the absorption of many different strains. This brought him into conflict with some government officials. Bartok refused to subscribe to unscientific, mystical, and jingoistic theories of "racial purity" in people or music. With the coming of Hitler to power in Germany, Hungary was increasingly drawn into the fascist axis. At this time Bartok began to travel more, appearing in concerts in France, England, and the United States.

### Moves to the U.S.A.

In 1940, finding conditions in Hungary intolerable, he made his home in the United States with his wife and son. During the Second World War he took part in some broadcasts beamed to the Hungarian people by the Allies. For the most part he lived in or near poverty, more interested in writing music and carrying on his folk music studies than in publicizing himself or in inspiring "schools," cliques, and groups of followers. At the time of his death he was still writing music full of vitality, and these last works are among his most lyrical and appealing.

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At present, almost all of Bartok's major symphonic and chamber works may be found on records, along with a number of the smaller works. Important works which still need to be recorded are the *First Piano Concerto*, the one-act opera *Bluebeard's Castle* (which was done by Dorati in concert), the ballet *The Wooden Prince*, the mime play *The Wonderful Mandarin* (a suite from which has been brilliantly performed by Reiner, and also, according to rumors, recorded), and the *Cantata Profana* for soloists, chorus, and orchestra. There is also a host of beautiful little piano works, songs, and choruses which deserve recording.

The earliest Bartok composition on records is the *Second Suite for Orchestra, Op. 4* (1905-7). This displays the already serious bent of the young composer's mind. Its four movements are of symphonic scope and proportions with Slavic themes, reminiscent of Dvorak, developed in a harmonic and orchestral texture taken from Richard Strauss, and with modulations that are reported to have shocked the more academic professors in Budapest. Particularly interesting is the second movement, *Allegro Scherzando*, which starts as a folk-like scherzo, moves into a brilliant fugue, and closes with an imposing dramatic climax for full orchestra. The work as a whole would stand up well today if three of its four movements were not the same slow, rhapsodic style. Henry Swoboda conducts it competently for the 1950 limited-edition series of Concert Hall (disc D-4).

### *First String Quartet*

The work from Bartok's early period, however, which announces his authority and unmistakable originality and genius, is the *First String Quartet, Op. 7* (1908). It is characteristic of Bartok that he looked upon each body of instruments as suggesting a different function, and therefore a different content and style of music. His orchestral works tend to be extrovert in character like public orations. The highly intimate medium of the string quartet he used (as Beethoven did in his later quartets) for his most deeply personal meditations and inner debates.

The *First String Quartet* is structurally interesting with its four movements woven together into an unbroken and integrated flow of sound. The opening is a grand and spacious piece of polyphony, built on a theme reminis-

cent of the opening of Smetana's *E minor Quartet* that rises to a climax in which the cello strikes double-stops on its lowest strings answered by yearning phrases from the other instruments. There are other elements typical of the later Bartok — the jagged themes that suggest a departure from the major and minor scales, and the harsh percussive sounds which are dramatically contrasted to poignant chromatic phrases.

The performance of this work by the original Pro Arte Quartet (Victor set M-286) is beautiful in tone, a deeply studied rendition. It is surpassed in dramatic fire, however, by the Juilliard String Quartet version (Columbia LP disc ML-4278, coupled with the *Second String Quartet*) which has the advantage of modern engineering and the unbroken, long-playing recording.

### *A Period of Research*

Bartok's work from 1905 to 1920 is taken up mainly with the folk song collections and shorter works in folk style. I shall discuss all recordings of works in this style together at this point, rather than chronologically; because many of the records bring together pieces composed at widely separate dates, and some of the collections of short pieces that were published late in Bartok's life were actually begun in this early period.

Perhaps the finest introduction to this aspect of Bartok, and for that matter to all of his work, is the set of sixteen *Folk Songs of Hungary* sung by Leslie Chabay with Tibor Kozma at the piano (Bartok Studios, LP disc, BRS 004). This group contains two songs (dated 1906) arranged by Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly (the latter accompanied Bartok on his folk song researches), two arranged by Kodaly alone, and twelve which date from 1907-17 and 1929 by Bartok alone. The accompaniments by Bartok for simple vocal lines are no mere harmonization but little creative masterpieces in true folk, improvisatory style, sometimes in the form of rippling obbligatos and sometimes in harp-like arpeggios. A particularly great work is *In the Jailhouse*, in which Bartok varies the piano accompaniment for each of the five stanzas, thereby building an integrated piece which, taken by itself, sounds like one of his powerful percussive piano works (i.e., the slow movement of the piano sonata). The style of the two performers is close to perfection.

The *Forty Four Duets for Two Violins* (published 1931) belong in the borderland between folk song arrangements and creative composition in folk style. The lyrical charm of these little polyphonic inventions is indescribable. The student of ethnic strains in music will find fine and accurate distinctions among the pieces labelled "Hungarian," "Ruthenian," "Wallachian," and "Arabian." The student of composition will also find fascinating studies in canon, inversion and every variety of ostinato, polyphonic imitation and polyrhythm, all within a tender lyricism and playful humor that never breaks the bounds of folk simplicity. The violinists Michael Kuttner and Victor Aitay perform the music with excellent understanding (Period, two LP discs, Set No. 506). The *85 Piano Pieces for Children* (1908-9) have very much the same lightness and charm, along with a succinctness and rightness of every note that reveals the hand of a master craftsman. Fifteen of them, recorded from a radio broadcast in which Bartok plays and also announces the titles, were issued on two vinylite discs (Vox 625), along with *Bear Dance* and *Evening in Transylvania* (1908). The two last-named works and ten of the *Pieces for Children* were re-issued as a filler on the Vox recording of the *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*.

### Folk Influence

The *Allegro Barbaro* (1914) and *Suite, Op. 14* (1916), both for piano, mark a major step in Bartok's development of a style of composition which has nothing to do with arrangement of folk melodies, but which is built on harmonic, rhythmic and timbre ideas extracted from his studies of folk music. The *Allegro Barbaro* is a witty and brilliant study in ostinatos. The *Suite, Op. 14* is made up of four bare and economical movements, whose relation to folk music may be seen by comparing them to the song accompaniments. They are performed by Bartok himself, along with a mellow *Roumanian Dance* and *A Bil Drunk*, from a set of two *Burlesques* (1909). The old recording is more than compensated for by the composer's stirring performance (Bartok Recording Studios, one 10" LP disc, BRS 008).

The *Improvisations, Op. 20* (1920) and the *Out of Doors Suite* (1926), for piano, carry still further this expansion of ideas devised from folk music. To Bartok folk idioms did not

consist of straight tunes so much as of motives capable of being used for free improvisation. The eight *Improvisations* are more abstract music, studies in the handling of rhythmic and harmonic problems. The five *Out of Doors* pieces are colorful little tone poems. Particularly enchanting is the *Night Music* piece, made up of little fragments of melodies, trills, held tones and staccatos, like a musical humming, chirping and whispering. Bartok seems to have a great love for this "night music" atmosphere, and uses it with haunting effect in many later and more imposing compositions. The two works are well performed by the young pianist Leonid Hambro, and the recorded piano tone is excellent (Bartok Studios, LP Disc, BRS 002).

### A Loveable Opus

The *Three Rondos on Folk Tunes* (1916-27) for piano display a very lovable aspect of the composer. In contrast to the starkness and violent feelings of the *Suite, Op. 14*, he builds in these pieces elaborate little structures which never depart from the sunny humor and child-like lyricism of the *Pieces for Children*. Lily Kraus performs them with captivating verve, along with the *Roumanian Dances* (Parlophone, two 12" discs, 20434-5).

The *Mikrokosmos* (1926-37) is one of Bartok's major works of instruction. It consists of 153 piano pieces, arranged in order of increasing difficulty. It offers an introduction not only to piano technique, but to varieties of rhythm, harmony and polyphony. These compositions tend to be abstract like the *Improvisations*, rather than lyrical like the *Pieces for Children*, but many of them may be regarded as poetic and whimsical little etudes. Bartok recorded 19 of these pieces chosen from the later and more difficult books (Columbia Set M-455). There are rumors that at the same time he recorded others but these have never materialized.

In 1929, Bartok recorded a number of his folk song arrangements, with himself at the piano, on four H.M.V. discs. The singers are M. Basilides (AN-1671), F. Szekehidly (AN-215) and V. Medgyaszay (AM-1676 and 1678). I have never heard these records but would consider them to be a most important item in the Bartok discography. There is one recording of Bartok's choral music, the *Enchanting Song* for boys choir. It is found as a

filler on Britten's *A Centenary of Carols* (English Decca Set EDA-56).

The following are some scattered recordings, most of which are different renditions of works listed above. One of the best single Bartok records is Hans Leybach's performances of *Allegro Barbaro* and *First Rondo* (H.M.V. 10" disc 7730). Maro Ajemian also plays the *First Rondo* very beautifully, along with the touching *First Bulgarian Dance* from *Mikrokosmos* (Victor 12" disc 12-0343). The *Roumanian Dances* (arranged for violin by Zoltan Szekely) are performed by Menuhin and Gazelle (Victor 12" disc 12-1061), Ida Haendel and I. Newton (English Decca 12" disc 1873), Szigeti and Bartok (Columbia 10" disc 17089-D), and Spivakovsky and Balsam (nos. 2 and 5 left out) as a filler on their Concert Hall recording of the *Second Violin Sonata*. The *Hungarian Folk Tunes*, also popular with violinists, are arrangements by Szigeti of some of the *Pieces for Children*. They are performed by Szigeti and Bartok (Columbia 12" disc 1427) and Ida Haendel and I. Newton (English Decca 12" disc 2029).

### "Bartok Plays Bartok"

In 1944 Continental issued a series of five discs called *Bartok Plays Bartok*, which always struck me as a wasted opportunity. Why was not the opportunity taken to do his *Sonatine* or *Sonata*? Unfortunately, the recording is fuzzy, both on 78 rpm and in its metamorphosis as a single LP record (Continental 101), but nonetheless has its value as a personal document (especially the original 78 rpm release). The music includes the *First Rondo*, five of the *Improvisations*, *Op. 20*, three *Hungarian Folk Tunes*, a *Prelude*, a *Bagatelle*, some arrangements for piano of the violin duets, and an arrangement for two pianos of two *Mikrokosmos* pieces (the latter played by Bartok and his wife, Ditta Pasztory).

Bartok played his *Suite, Op. 14* on 78 rpm (H.M.V. 12" disc AN-468). The same work is also performed by the pianist, M. Barzetti (Hungarian H.M.V. S-10491). Jean Germain also does the *Out of Doors Suite* (Classic, 3 10" discs, 2044-6) and the *Suite, Op. 13* (Classic 2020), while Kilyeni plays the two *Burlesques* (1909) (Columbia 70438-D), and Kentner does four of the *Pieces for Children* (English Columbia DX-989). Edith Farnadi performs the *Allegro Barbaro* and four *Mikrokosmos* pieces (Fr. Columbia GFX-148).

These folk music collections, arrangements, and studies, inventions, suites and other short works based on folk style, may be called the roots and trunk of the tree that produced the firm fruit of Bartok's major concert works. They are the key to the understanding of the idiom of all the large-scale works written after 1920. These large-scale works never quote what may be called an actual folk song or dance except for occasional whimsical purposes. Yet all of their most original and startling qualities of timbre and texture are traceable to folk music.

To mention some of the elements of Bartok's major works which were inspired by and built on a base of Balkan folk music: there is first of all his polytonality, which is often nothing more than the polyphonic interplay of melodies that use folk scale patterns different from the major and minor scales. Of folk origin also is the use of ostinatos and a drone bass, as in the second movement of the *Second Quartet*, the first movement of the *Fifth Quartet*, the two scherzi of the *Concerto for Orchestra*. Then there is his spinning of sensuous melodic lines of the utmost variety, around a single repeated note used as a tonal axis. The second movement of the *Second Violin Sonata* is a particularly fine example of this. Another element is the percussiveness of timbre, reminiscent of the strumming, beating of the instruments with the hands, and clapping of hands in folk music, which Bartok employed as a sharp accentuation of his poignant lyrical passages. There is also the enchanting "night music" writing, which makes up two of his very beautiful movements, the second of the *Fifth Quartet* and the third of the *Concerto for Strings, Percussion and Celeste*. This element reappears as well in the slow movements of the *Second* and *Third Piano Concertos*, and in the *Concerto for Orchestra*.

### Native Dance Influences

Some of Bartok's most ambitious formal structures, such as the first movement of the *Violin Concerto* and the entire *Third String Quartet*, are expansions of the basic pattern of a Hungarian festive dance, starting with the gathering of the people, moving into a slow measured dance, and then accelerating in tempo to a wild climax. (This is also the basic pattern of many of the Liszt Hungarian rhapsodies.)

The major works are influenced spiritually as well as emotionally by folk music, as if Bartok shared and reflected in his music the mind of the Hungarian peasant — oppressed and impoverished, miserably frustrated, a breaking forth in outbursts of angry violence — with all a love of life and open-hearted laughter. Yet for all his use of folk material, Bartok never surrenders the classical achievements of music. In his music he uses fugue forms, the interplay of rhythmic and harmonic movement characteristic of 18th century counterpoint, the classic polyphonic concerto forms, the harmonic relationships of sonata form. He reflects no cult of primitivism in his work. He sought all his life to attain — without insincerity, padding, or fakery — the architectural grandeur and dramatic breadth of the greatest musical works.

Let us take up again the thread of Bartok's major concert and chamber works. The decade of 1910-1920 saw the appearance of all of Bartok's stage works; the one-act opera, *Bluebeard's Castle* (1911), the ballet *The Wooden Prince* (1916) and the mime-play *The Wonderful Mandarin* (1919). It is significant of the deep contrasts and inner conflicts in Bartok's mind that the sunny and tender folk song arrangements of this period should appear alongside these harrowing expressionistic works. Yet the inner conflict is explained by an outer one.

The decade of 1910-1920 was one in which the Balkans, as historians state it, were the "powder keg" of Europe, seething with peasant revolts, torn by Empire politics. The flames that were to explode in the First World War were already flickering. The war itself brought terrible bloodshed to the Balkan peasantry. It is this sense of violence, anguish and horror which finds expression in the stage works, which use seemingly quaint or innocent fairy tales for agonized expressions. None of them are recorded, but the *Second String Quartet* Op. 17 (1914-17) (which is recorded) presents a similar emotional experience. A polyphonic slow movement, based on melodies of intense sadness, is followed by a powerful, driving movement built on ostinatos, in the *Allegro Barbaro* manner. The work ends with another slow movement almost unbearable in its sense of tragedy. The difficulties which this work presents to the listener rise not out of any baffling idiom but out of its searing emotions which prohibit

casual listening. It is one of the great emotional and musical documents of its era. The quartet was splendidly performed on records by the Budapest Quartet in 1936, (Victor set M-320), but this performance is equalled in understanding and surpassed in recorded tone by that of the Juilliard Quartet (Columbia LP ML-4278, reverse of *First Quartet*). The two performances are different, with the Juilliard group sharpening the dramatic contrasts of the first and last slow movements. The quartet was also recorded in 1925 by the Amar-Hindemith Quartet, (Polydor discs 66425-8).

(To be continued next month)

## EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 2)

Thursdays to Fridays. The Society will meet during the 1950-51 season on the first and third Friday of the month (beginning October 6) at the Fraternal Club House (Adler Room) at 110 West 48th Street. The Adler Room is equipped with theater seats which assures everyone comfort for the entire evening. Arrangements at its new quarters permits the Society to serve refreshments after any or all meetings. It is hoped that these facilities will promote an even greater sociability among its membership.

The Society welcomes visitors. We urge all readers who appreciate the companionable qualities of music listening to make it a point to attend a gathering. An unusual number of folks, who predispose an antipathy to societies, have found the congenial company of other record-minded people worth cultivating. The Society's programs are planned to serve the interests of the many, in like manner to concert programs, but with the exception that they present many rare and unusual selections of merit. Write for guest tickets to the Secretary of the Society, Samuel Miller, 150 Bennett Ave., New York 33, or simply make it a point to attend a meeting and mention this notice at the door.

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The Boston Society of Recorded Music, which has been active longer than the New York society, has an excellent hall for the presentation of its programs. It has the

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guiding spirit of Arthur Fiedler, the conductor, as president, and the friendly and co-operative assistance of Frederic W. Lord, II, as secretary. This group welcome visitors; and anyone living in or near Boston, who is seriously interested in recorded music, would do well to pay the society a visit. The dates and place of meetings are not at hand, so we suggest that any interested reader either phone or send a card to the secretary. His address is 5 Arlington St., Boston, and his phone number is Commonwealth 6-2275. An unusual feature of the Boston Society is the occasional auction of records from member's collections.



Greek coin, 6th century B.C.\*

## Mozarts "Idomeneo"

**MOZART:** *Idomeneo* — *Re di Creta* (complete opera) (K. 366) and *Ballet Music to Idomeneo* (K. 367); **Horst Taubmann** (Idomeneo); **Greta Menzel** (Idamante); **Herbert Handt** (Arbace); **Gertrud Hopf** (Ilia); **Gertrud Grob-Prandl** (Elettra); **Erich Majkut** (High Priest of Neptune); **Anton Heiller** (Voice of Neptune); **The Vienna Symphony Orchestra** and the **Chorus of the Vienna State Opera** conducted by **Meinhard von Zallinger**. Haydn Society set HSLP 2020, four LP discs, \$23.80.

**THE HAYDEN SOCIETY** should have chosen to call itself the Haydn-Mozart Society, for this recorded performance of

\*Used as cover decoration by the Haydn Society.

Mozart's neglected *opera seria*, *Idomeneo*, is an all important contribution to the literature of Mozart on records. Had the society hyphenated its name to include the works of that more sublime genius, the achievement of this one opus in such a splendid production and fine recording would have been sufficient justification for the double title.

Productions of *Idomeneo* are almost as rare as visible total eclipses of the sun. On the stage, this opera — rightfully rated as Mozart's first truly great one — might not satisfy a modern audience, as its form is long defunct and its action too formalized. This business of having a character enter and sing an aria and then exit, followed by another character who does the same thing, results in static drama. Anyone who has seen a Handel opera will understand the theatrical weaknesses of this form of writing. *Idomeneo* has been produced in the manner of an oratorio, which surely seems a rational procedure. And, as opera via the phonograph takes on characteristics of an oratorio, this work is logically suited to the medium. Nevertheless, the style of this work remains a rather awkward one, especially when it is considered in relation to later operatic developments towards realism and in respect to Mozart's later scores like *Così fan tutte* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

However, it is the music which counts, and, despite some shortcomings of the libretto, it is live music and a monument to Mozart's genius. The recitatives do become a bit burdensome, yet in many of them Mozart has achieved some truly poignant, dramatic effects. The choral writing, on the whole, is excellent though not of great dramatic impact. The marches are effective in a theatrical way. The arias are redundant, everything is sung twice over, but who among us, outside of George Bernard Shaw, would wish to cut them? For they are gratifyingly written for the singers, and what gives eminence to even the overly ornate ones (as elaborate as violin concertos, says Eric Blom) is Mozart's innovation of often merging them into the next number by a transition "that is musically an astonishing device" considering that it leaves the singer without opportunity for applause. As Blom says: "Mozart had the courage to deprive the singer of applause in the interests of his own musico-dramatic intentions," which was heroism in the 18th century.

One of Mozart's grievances against the Archbishop's court at Salzburg was its lack of opera. As he was always happy when writing for the theater, we can imagine his delight when during his last year at Salzburg (1880) he was commissioned to write a serious opera by the Bavarian Court. That the libretto entrusted to the Salzburg court chaplain, Giambattista Varesco, was a poor one, Mozart well knew, and at the cost of offense, he achieved some alterations. But a majority of librettos have been notoriously poor from the dawn of the music drama to the present time. It is the music which gives them endurance. In respect to the involved libretto of *Idomeneo*, as Henri Ghéon has said: "Once one has accepted the presence of the captive princess of Troy at the court of Idomeneo, King of Crete, and the visit which Elettra, daughter of Agamemnon, chose to make after the death of her father and the triumph of the adulterous couple in Argos, the mutual love of Idamante and the captive princess, Ilia, and the unrequited love of Elettra for Idamante. . . one can be interested in the rival passions of the two women and especially in the central theme which recalls Phèdre and Iphigénie." Yes, one can become interested in the entangled relationships of the characters because Mozart succeeded in making these Greek puppets appealing, if not always believable entities, through his music.

### The Opera's Plot

The central motive of *Idomeneo* takes us back to the story of Jephtha in the Bible. On his way home from the Trojan War, Idomeneo escapes death in a shipwreck after vowing that if he is delivered from the perils of the sea he will sacrifice to Poseidon (Neptune) the first human being he meets on land. This proves to be his son, Idamante. Thinking to cheat Poseidon, Idomeneo bids his son fly with Elettra and rule in Mycenae. The Sea God then sends a monster to remind the King of his vow, but his son kills the monster as the King is about to carry out his vow. Idamante's betrothed, Ilia, appears and begs to die with him, and this devotional act causes Poseidon to have a change of heart. And so, all ends happily!

The music of this opera owes much to Gluck; but as an *opera seria*, compared to similar works by Gluck, it is less austere. Blom says it "was never meant to be any-

thing but an *opera seria* of the common run, more in the manner of Piccini, really, than in that of Gluck. . . It was entertainment of a special kind, not a sermon, a morality play or an example of dramatic reform." The work moves along more or less smoothly and, considering its libretto limitations, inspirationally. I think Ghéon has hit the nail squarely on the head with his contention that "it assimilates and forms into a single personal language every known way of fitting sounds to words from the exact and sensitive inflexion of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* to the austere declamation of a tragedy by Gluck." Ghéon's further assertion that the lament of Idomeneo and the High Priest in the last act has similar sensuous qualities to the recitative-like melodies of *Boris Godounoff* is an interesting one.

### A Poor Translation

The Haydn Society provides a libretto with the original Italian text and a reasonable English translation which, however, in no way can be called a satisfactory literal translation. The usefulness of this libretto with its scholarly notes, cannot be minimized, particularly as the score of *Idomeneo* is unavailable.

The overall disposition of the performance is particularly gratifying, for the singers have fine voices and the orchestral direction would seem to be efficient and vital. There is an unmistakable enthusiasm to the whole production, as though all participants derived an inspirational impetus from the novelty of the occasion.

On first acquaintance, this production left me with the firm conviction that it was carefully planned and realized. That it was accomplished in the Mozart Hall of the *Konzert-haus* in Vienna might suggest a sentimental premise that a spiritual guidance prevailed, but more important is the hall's live acoustic qualities which served the recording to advantage. For, even the spirit of Mozart would be considerably hampered in an unresonant atmosphere, no matter what medi-umistic efforts were conjured to invoke its support.

The endless debate regarding the 18th-century custom of writing the character of a youth for a female voice is evoked by Mozart's conception of Idamante as a soprano *castrato*. The timbre of the *castrato* singer was, of course, less sensuous than the femi-

nine counterpart, and undoubtedly offered some contrast. The original Idamante, Vincenzo dal Prato, we are told, was "a rank beginner and stiff as a board," which suggests an impoverished actor as well as human being. Greta Menzel, the present Idamante, is a sensuous soprano, too vitally feminine for an ideal projection of the role. Contrast of voices in this opera is strangely lacking. The three woman participants are all sopranos, and of the four male characters three are tenors and one a bass. This makes for unrelieved similarity in vocal timbre, especially among the women (one of whom we are supposed to visualize as a man). The dramatic assembly of parts serves the male singers better, as the three tenors are not required to vie directly with each other. What temperamental tempests such a situation might have provoked!

The engineering characteristics of the recording are on the whole good, though I am not convinced that the Haydn Society presses its offerings on the best of LP material available these days. There are some occasional surface ticks.

No Mozart enthusiast and certainly few operatic fans will wish to pass up this set, for it is a valuable contribution not only to a complete Mozart library but to a well-rounded operatic library. Another recording of excerpts from *Idomeneo* is announced by Mercury; but no matter what its excellence of performance may be, the advent of a complete version (as Mozart finally arranged it) gives this set a rightful precedence. —P.H.R.

man "whose activity spread over wider territory and engaged the attention of more minds than any other European of his day."

Berlioz's French biographer, Boschot, buried him "under a monument of denigration." Long consulted as the fullest source, Boschot's "indispensable and untrustworthy work . . . while lowering Berlioz to the uses of a scapegoat strengthened the distaste for an epoch that was just then passing through the normal purgatory of the years." As a symbol of the Romantic era, is it any wonder that Berlioz has in our century been almost thoroughly misrepresented by the many culture groups which have fostered a determined reaction to his period?

Such a book as Jacques Barzun's superb *Berlioz and the Romantic Century* has long



Berlioz in 1863

## RECENT BOOKS

**BERLIOZ AND THE ROMANTIC CENTURY.** By Jacques Barzun. Atlantic-Little, Brown. Boston, Mass. 1084 pages (2 vols.). \$12.50.

**H**ECTOR BERLIOZ has never been easy to pigeonhole. His fresh methods and enormous variety of expression in musical composition, in thinking, and in writing have always made him an easy target for those who insist on dropping all figures — great and small — into familiar categories. He was "the epitome of a complex age" as well as a

been overdue to clear up the misconceptions surrounding Berlioz, to give the composer's followers succor, and to enable Berlioz's detractors to damn him intelligently (which is a great deal more than most of them have ever been prepared to do). To accomplish these ends, it was absolutely necessary for Barzun to write the several books which make up his work: "the life of a man who was at once artist, thinker, and doer; a concert or record guide to twelve great works increasingly valued by connoisseurs; an essay on esthetics; an account of 19th century culture; and . . . a tract for our times as well." That he has succeeded so admirably is cause for rejoicing.

Barzun has the imagination, the sympathy, the wit, and the reason to give the perceptive reader a well-lighted vision of one of history's most fruitful ages of creation and an evocation of that period's leading protagonist. Indeed, it seems to me the first time that a writer has captured the spirit of the real Berlioz — an indomitable man whose practicality, resourcefulness, and unbelievable energy are as much in evidence as his sensitive feelings and the unusual fertility of his "seminal mind." Barzun shows the reader how to learn Berlioz's ways, how to see through his eyes and discover how past and current achievements affected his gifts in the making of great new work. Moreover, by generalizing and demonstrating by massive instance, Barzun has made clear how in the Romantic period great work got accomplished, fought over, and slowly assimilated. Some of the most fascinating portions of the work are those which occur in the middle of the volume and deal with the artist in society. The reader has by this time seen how Berlioz could succeed as well as he did in the early part of his career, and surmise how, later in life, he could survive. It is a frighteningly convincing argument that Barzun then makes to show how such an artist as Berlioz would probably perish today without ever hearing his first works played. It is enough to wither one's heart.

### Interest Aroused

Barzun tells us in the introduction of his book that he first became interested in Berlioz about twenty years ago through repeated hearings of the *Symphonie Fantastique* and two overtures (the Berlioz repertory at that time). He goes on to say that the program notes and reviews that followed concerts which included the *Fantastique* were a continual source of discomfort. Upon reflection, Barzun became convinced that while dwelling on the "program" (which, by the way, was the only one that Berlioz ever wrote for any of his works) most reviewers had scarcely touched the work of art. In addition, the writers of the programs had, through presenting bits of the artist's life, utterly misconceived the composer's character.

After reading all of the obvious source material and the score of the *Fantastique*, the author became insatiably curious. When he tried to go further, however, he found that

he had "entered the jungle" and that what he read seldom tallied with what he heard.

After a time Barzun discovered that "the conflict seemed to go deeper than tastes." He had read that Berlioz had every gift but the melodic. Yet he found Berlioz's melodies "abundant, remarkable in form as well as varied in kind." He discovered, as have most of the highly accomplished musicians in every generation since Berlioz's time, that the composer's melodies are long and often asymmetrical, that they are apt to be presented in combinations of two or more, that connecting passages are likely to anticipate the full-blown tune by presenting fragments, and finally that until a listener has mastered the fresh and elegant melodic organization of one of Berlioz's works, he is a first listener. Barzun concluded that "if it takes but the judgment of twelve peers to decide when a man has committed a crime, it should take no more to prove whether a man has committed a melody, and in that case Berlioz is vindicated."

### Berlioz's Expressiveness

Barzun had read that all of Berlioz's works, especially the *Fantastique*, illustrated events, depicted objects. Yet left to himself, the author could make out no such storytelling. Indeed, he, like those who have imaginative powers and who know that "Romanticism assumes the active co-ordination of mind and heart (or senses) and plays an endlessly modulating tune upon the great distribution of impulses and re-creation of experience," followed the *Fantastique* like any other music. And so it went from *Harold in Italy* to *The Trojans*. Barzun found that Berlioz is (what so many of his admirers have known) "the least literal or descriptive of dramatic musicians. He does not depict but transmutes, and he is difficult precisely because of this, which throws the listeners back upon an explanation — a program to help him over a style."

Music for Berlioz was an art related to life. "Berlioz's cardinal principle," writes Barzun, "was expressiveness, which does not mean imitation, does not mean formlessness, does not mean program music. Neither does it mean the destruction or neglect of traditional elements which are rooted in pure sensation and call forth design — from melody and rhythm to harmony and counterpoint. In-

deed to these elements Berlioz was enabled by the technological advance of his age to add the new one of timbre or tone color, which before him had been used for ornament and expression rather than as a part of structure." In short, Berlioz's consistent view of the function of music was that it should reproduce spiritual gestures; and that "music is not in itself programmatic or absolute, but rather what the listener makes of it; and that people will talk even if music is hard to talk about."

That Berlioz succeeded as he did during a time when "the prevailing opinion was that music gives pleasure amid other occupations or during idle reverie — always, that is, at the expense of the understanding" is a miracle.

### *The True Berlioz Revealed*

Henceforth let no one who reads this book describe Berlioz as a monument of incompleteness. If anyone ever had his eye on a steadfast star throughout his life, it was Berlioz. That he always knew where he was going is patently illustrated by the fact that by the time he was thirty, he had sketched or conceived or been drawn to the subject of every one of his major works.

It is shameful that some of the best products of Berlioz's mind are unknown to most Americans. Because many of the works cost so much that our symphony and opera societies are reluctant to schedule any of them over once in a decade, it would seem that what we need most is more phonograph records. And I don't mean the "umpteenth" recording of the *Hungarian March*, I mean first recordings of things like *The Trojans*, *Te Deum*, and *The Infant Christ*.

If Barzun's book is to fulfill its hope for such recordings, some of us are going to have to begin thinking about a Berlioz Society. As Barzun sagely points out, "We should still be without the Beethoven piano sonatas had it not been for a subscription scheme."

**RECORDS — 1950 Edition.** By David Hall. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. 524 pages and Index. \$5.00.

**THE NEW GUIDE TO RECORDED MUSIC** (International Edition). By Irving Kolodin. Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1950. 524 pages. \$4.00.

Browsing through the pages of these two books one might wonder how any one writer

could have thoughtfully heard all of the recordings discussed. To write an efficient and stimulating "record book" that gives penetrating comment on all the periods and styles of music, the various methods of interpreting, and the speckled history of recording skill and its playback must always, it seems, be more of a lofty challenge than a fulfillment.

Of these two authors David Hall covers more of the above ground. Irving Kolodin, a well known critic of long experience, confines himself generally to a discussion of interpretive values. Hall addresses his reader in a very cordial manner. He is at once the friend of questing music lovers and tries to give them considered advice on selecting the most desirable musical works as well as performances. One instinctively feels that Hall enjoys his music on records, while Kolodin, more often than not, gives one the impression that listening to recorded music is merely a work-a-day chore like reviewing concerts.

David Hall has much of youth's enthusiasm and less of the astuteness of the experienced writer. As the more mature critic, Kolodin has a slicker style, a keener power of reasoning, and an astringent wit that frequently suggests the cynic rather than the "well-tempered" listener and guide. Hall certainly reveals less boredom in his writing, and he appears to have a more genuine affection for music. As a record company official, Hall is in a good position to present many inside facts about records and recording. It is to his credit that he does not shirk criticism of the trade.

The introduction to Hall's book is a more extensive survey of the contemporary scene than Kolodin's. Hall discusses the different speeds and types of records, the growth of the industry, the potentialities of the future. In addition, there are recommendations for the playing of the various speeds and the care and storage of all records. (Hall's book is not a revision of his earlier work, *The Record Book*.) In the main section, Hall has eliminated biographical data, except in cases of composers not formerly discussed.

One cannot imagine any serious record collector who wishes to develop a well-rounded library not acquiring both these books. Both authors deserve credit for their contributions to a field which, because of its permanence, merits the most thoughtful and well-disposed consideration. —J.N.

# LP Re-Issues

▲ CETRA-SORIA has issued long-playing versions of a group of 18-century Italian works which it previously imported on 78 rpm discs. The LP issues are excellently accomplished and recommendable to those who value the profits and pleasures that this music gives. It is not a matter of eluding one's thoughts or troubles, as one writer has recently suggested, which makes many of us turn back to the music of former times, but the desire for contrast in esthetic values. Those who center their attention upon one branch or aspect of art are limiting their artistic pleasures. Contrast is essential to the greater enjoyment of all things. "The highest pleasure that nature has indulged to sensitive perception," said Ben Johnson, "is that of rest after fatigue." Life in every age has had its harassing times; joy and anguish have always gone hand in hand. If after a particularly enervating and nervously intensifying day one, wishing to find a perfect anodyne, turns away from the music of his own time and seeks the more tranquil products of a by-gone age, this is not necessarily indulging in escapism. All music has the power to lift or soothe the lagging spirits, even as food or drink, and contrast in all things assures a greater enjoyment of life. One pities the impoverished music listener who lives on music of one kind or era, who lacks the intellectual curiosity to investigate music in all branches and in all eras.

Our preamble is by way of stimulating interest in the series of recordings of old Italian music, which Cetra-Soria has wisely placed on LP discs. Yet, our reasoning does not apply alone to these offerings but also to much on which we have written elsewhere.

On Cetra's LP disc 50,021 is coupled **Corelli's** *Concerto Grosso in D major, Op. 6, No. 1* and **Geminiani's** *Concerto Grosso in G minor, Op. 3, No. 2*. The classical beauty of Corelli contrasts well with the Baroque style of Geminiani, in which more liveliness of expression prevails. Whereas Corelli often achieves a spiritual pathos in his music, Geminiani attains a more sensuous beauty in his solo lines and rich organ-like *continuo* (see

original reviews in issue of June, 1948). Both works are competently performed by the **Orchestra of Radio Italiana** under the direction of **Carlo Zecchi**. Another LP disc (50,022) couples **Vivaldi's** *Violin Concerto in E major (Il Reposo)* and the *Overture* to **Vivaldi's** opera, *L'Olimpiade*, with **Boccherini's** *Quintet in C major* and the *Pastorale* from his *Quintet in D major* (these latter played in string orchestra arrangements). The corpse of Vivaldi cannot be resurrected but his spirit has certainly manifested itself in a more imposing manner in recent times than ever before. The Italians have long held him in high regard and we have seldom heard a poor performance of his music by Italian artists. **Antonio Gramigna**, concert master of the Orchestra of Radio Italiana, tastefully plays the solo part of the concerto. The overture is a sort of bright eye-opener to condition an audience for the coming show, but hardly cut from the same fine cloth of the concerto. It should have prefaced the performance of the concerto. The Boccherini works are well served by augmented strings which enrich the freedom and spontaneity of the composer's elative ideas.

Cetra's LP disc 50,023 is all **Vivaldi**, served up this time in arrangements by moderns. There is the *Concerto in B minor*, made into a piano concerto by **Tamburini** from the Bach transcription for harpsichord, and an unidentified *Largo* from a *Violin Concerto*, transcribed for orchestra, by **Gentili**, and finally the *Concerto Grosso in D minor, Op. 3, No. 11* in the arrangement by **Siloti**. The latter has also been played by **Koussevitzky** (Victor set 886), though of the two performances we favor the present one by the Italian Radio Orchestra with its freer spirit. A performance of the original version by **Schneider** and the **Dumbarton Oaks Chamber Orchestra** (Mercury LP 10002) is too hurried in tempi, but it otherwise admirably played. The *B minor Concerto* is doubtful Vivaldi; but Bach thought well enough of it to arrange it for solo clavier. Tamburini dresses up the Bach work in winter clothing (thick-textured orchestration) but the stylistic playing of the pianist, **Mario Salerno**, recommends the recording to all except the purist. The Orchestra of Radio Italiana, one of the finest organizations in

(Continued on page 36)



# Record Notes and Reviews

**T**HERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs, or martial, brisk, or grave, some chord in unison with what we hear, is touched within us and the heart replies.

## Orchestra

**BIZET:** *L'Arlesienne* — *Suites Nos. 1 and 2*; Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Carl Schuricht (No. 1) and by Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt (No. 2). Capitol 10" LP disc, \$3.85.

▲THERE IS SOME fine orchestral playing in these two suites and the recording, if not quite as bright as the recent London *L'Arlesienne* offering (see June issue), remains satisfying. Of the two performances, the playing of Schuricht is more appreciable in this essentially French music. In the *Minuet* and *Adagietto*, he has admirable poetic sensitivity. Yet, neither he nor Schmidt-Isserstedt have the true Gallic élan and volatility which the music demands. The latter is too precise, in the manner of Van Beinum, but he has more vigor. Compare the Schuricht handling of the opening theme of the *Prelude* with Schmidt-Isserstedt's treatment of the same tune in the *Farandole*. Schuricht's Viennese training stands him in better stead than Schmidt-Isserstedt's German training.

—P.H.R.

**BIZET:** *La Jolie Fille de Perth-Suite*; and **DELIUS:** *Over the Hills and Far Away*; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia 10" LP disc ML3133, \$3.85.

▲A SUITE OF FIVE NUMBERS from Bizet's four-act opera *The Fair Maid of Perth* was recorded a number of years ago by the London Philharmonic under Beecham (Columbia set X-28, withdrawn). Since it has

always been a favorite, it is agreeable to have a modern version, which may or may not be a slightly different selection.

Students of conducting could do well to study this piece as set forth here by a past master of the art of making a mole hill sound like a mountain. The exaggerated ritards that caused eyebrows to lift in the Mozart symphonies are quite in keeping here. The delicate balancing of internal voices, the quizzical turns of phrases, hesitations and *Luftpausen*, these are the tools of an artist who can make a simple air with a plink-plunk accompaniment as meaningfully imbued with its own presence as a Bach chorale.

The bucolic charms of Delius's innocuous pastorate are gorgeously set forth in some of the finest LP recording I have heard to date. The expertly laid-on tonal colorings of this old favorite from the second Delius Society album of more than 10 years ago glow with new life in this up-to-date reading. Perhaps the woodwind and brass soloists do not have the individuality of style and tone that one might obtain from a really fine continental or American orchestra, but one does not feel this loss because of the firm hand of the conductor. It was the same way when Beecham conducted one of our WPA orchestras before the war.

—A.W.P.

**FRANCK:** *Symphony in D minor*; San Francisco Symphony Orchestra conducted by Pierre Monteux. Victor LP disc LM 1065, \$5.45 (also 45 set WDM-1382 and 78 set DM-1382).

▲THIS IS NOT A REISSUE on LP of Monteux's previous performance but a new one. Says RCA Victor, "Profiting from recent advances in recording technique and

engineering ingenuity, the new Monteux interpretation makes available the most modern version of this work." Touché! A point well made, though what reflection it aims at other sets than the previous Monteux one, I decline to conjecture. Certainly, it ranks with London's *ffrr* release by Muench and the Paris Conservatory Orchestra, and that is about as fine a compliment as can be bestowed.

It is evident from the start that Monteux has organized his previous reading for there is far less of the heaving and over-stress, though the dramatic qualities of the music are fully observed as indicated by the score. You cannot minimize with Franck, though you do not have to over-stress the emotional lushness and agitation *a la* Stokowski and Mengelberg. Beecham was the soul of discretion in these matters and turned in the most musically reading of the work on records, but at what price Franck? Neville Cardus, the eminent English critic, says that the music dramatizes good and evil: "In the opening bars the serpent lifts its head. . . the wind instruments supplicate; and towards the end of the first movement the brass sequences, with the main three-note motif, are gigantic in their insistence. . . The allegretto reveals Franck at his beads; the violins intone the credo; then the devils whisper, and again the heavenly host is supplicated; and in the finale, Franck is at his spiritual labors once more, in spite of the carillon echoes that seek an easier solution." David Hall uses a good word to describe Monteux's performance — momentum. Without momentum the drama is obscured. Naturally in the finale that momentum is increased and emphasized, for the spiritual labors must win out. Muench failed to keep his momentum uninterrupted, not Monteux.

—P.H.R.

**GERSHWIN:** *Rhapsody in Blue*; José and Amparo Iturbi (duo-pianists) with RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by José Iturbi, and CHANDLER: *All American* (A Satirical Suite for Two Pianos); José and Amparo Iturbi. RCA Victor 10" LP disc LM-23, \$4.45 (also 45 set WDM-1366 and 78 set DM-1366).

▲A WOW OF A RECORDING out of Victor's top drawer. The two Iturbis recorded a two-piano arrangement of *Rhapsody in Blue* back in 1938 but it was overshadowed

by the Sanroma-Fiedler version. The Iturbis, a unique two-piano team, turn in a good performance of Gershwin's most popular score. The inclusion of most of Gershwin's original orchestration was a wise idea, though as might be expected in an arrangement of this kind some of the orchestration is dropped to give the two pianists a free show. Also the work has been slightly condensed by the elimination of three short sections, which as far as I'm concerned does no harm. This LP version of *Rhapsody in Blue* has an edge over the Levant-Ormandy version, for the Iturbis are as understanding of the idiomatic qualities of the music as Levant and despite a few muddled orchestral passages Iturbi's orchestral direction is freer and closer to the spirit of the work. I can imagine a brighter and more vital rendition of this score — something akin to what Sanroma and Fiedler realized, but it remains doubtful that that performance will be duplicated.

On the reverse face, Victor has repressed Dr. J. Clarence Chandler's *All American*, an amusing and mildly diverting suite which was released several years ago. Its four movements have self-explanatory titles: *Chicken in the Hay*, *Lush*, *Bloozey Woozey*, and *Parade of the Visiting Firemen*. The Iturbis unquestionably had a good time performing it.

—P.G.

✓**HANDEL:** *Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, Nos. 1-4*; Boyd Neel Orchestra conducted by Boyd Neel. London 10" LP discs LPS-206/7, \$9.90.

▲**BETWEEN** September 29 and October 20, 1739, Handel turned out all twelve of his "Grand Concertos in seven parts for four violins, a tenor and a violincello, with a thoroughbass for the harpsichord." Just before these compositions he had completed the "Little" *St. Cecilia Ode* and directly afterward, *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato*. This was also the year that he witnessed the first productions of *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*.

Handel at the time was financially distraught, and this fact may have had something to do with his appalling industry. It is perhaps true that most of these compositions were already mostly worked out in his mind before he ever picked up pen and paper. Else how can one explain how Handel managed to write the entire *A Minor Concerto* (No. 4) between sunrise and sunset on October 8, 1739? Moreover, how otherwise can one explain the



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high level that Handel maintained throughout twelve concertos?

It is good to have the first four of this superb series in such effective renditions. One hopes that London will get around to recording the other eight scores and that they will turn out as well as the present group, for these records are well nigh close to perfection. The interpretation and playing on these discs, as I have indicated, is quite good, and the recording is of the best quality. Indeed I cannot recall having heard a better reproduction of a string orchestra.

For those who are not familiar with Handel's Concertos, here is a list of the parts that make up the first four.

*Concerto Grosso No. 1 in G*: mostly majestic in tone, this work consists of a *Tempo Giusto*, an *Allegro*, an *Adagio*, a fugue (*Allegro*), and a concluding *Allegro* of a dance-like character.

*Concerto Grosso No. 2 in F*: one of the loveliest of the entire set, an extended pastoral in four parts — *Andante larghetto*, *Allegro*, *Largo*, and a trio-style *Finale*.

*Concerto Grosso No. 3 in E* begins with a solemn *Larghetto* which runs into an *Andante* made memorable by an exceedingly rich chromatic harmonization. All this is followed by a grave *Polonaise* and a dance-like *Finale*.

*Concerto Grosso No. 4 in A Minor* is a deeply expressive work that contains an especially beautiful *Larghetto affettuoso*, an energetic *Allegro*, a *Largo* that resembles a fantasia in form, and a lively *Finale*. —C.J.L.

**HANDEL:** *The Water Music*. **MOZART:** *Symphony No. 35 in D ("Haffner")* (K. 385); **London Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Eduard van Beinum**. London LLP-214, \$5.95.

▲ HERE is an excellent interpretation that is superbly recorded of Handel's grand and jolly *Water Music*. The work, perhaps the best introduction to Handel's instrumental music, is presented in the much-admired Sir Hamilton Harty arrangement. *The Water Music*, composed in 1715 for one of King George I's river parties on the Thames, is a suite of six movements in the Harty version. Arranged in 1918, the suite is scored for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, four horns, timpani, and strings.

It is interesting to note that (since the *Water Music* was intended for out-of-door uses)

the work afforded Handel the opportunity first to introduce the French horn into one of his scores. The horn in the early 18th century was regarded as an instrument for fanfares and far too coarse for symphonic purposes.

Van Beinum's reading of the "Haffner" is vigorous and a bit too business-like for my taste. Using what I take to be the full string section of the LPO, he makes no attempt to evoke the textures and sonorities of Mozart's orchestra. In addition, the strings often blanket some of the woodwind passages. The playing of the LPO is a little better than usual on both sides of this disc, but there is still some roughness in execution and in balance that spoils a few passages.

The recording of the "Haffner" is a complete delight and altogether the best one available. For interpretive values, however, ever, I'll still stick to Beecham's Mozart. For me, that's the real article. —C.J.L.

**THE HEART OF THE BALLET:** Selections from *Giselle* (Adam), *Les Sylphides* (Chopin, arr. Rieti), *Sylvia* (Delibes), *The Swan Lake* (Tchaikovsky), *Le Spectre de la Rose* or *Invitation to the Dance* (Weber, arr. Berloiz), and *Waltz of the Flowers* from *The Nutcracker Suite* (Tchaikovsky); **Leopold Stokowski** and his Orchestra. Victor LP disc LM-1083, \$5.45 (also 45 set WDM-1394 or 78 set DM-1394).

▲ REMEMBER STOKOWSKI'S RECORDING of *The Sleeping Beauty*, well this is a sort of sequel to it. The recording is not quite as dazzling but it is tonally beautiful throughout. Stokowski knows what he wants from individual instruments and he knows how to get it too. Listen to Julius Baker's flute tone in the Weber-Berloiz and note how the flute floats above the ensemble. Or listen to the solo violin of Michael Rosenker in the music from Adam's *Giselle* for a similar effect. The orchestra is not a large one but it includes some of the foremost first desk players in New York: John Corigliano (violin), Laszlo Varga (cello), Robert Bloom (oboe), David Oppenheim (clarinet), and Lucile Lawrence (harp).

As a Stokowski show, this one is designed to go to the "heart" of the listener (no pun intended). Some may feel that Stokowski is overly sentimental and given to some questionable retards, but you'll have to admit he gets results with an orchestra and

achieves some lovely sounds. His introduction to *Invitation to the Dance* is sheer orchestral poetry, and his performance of the whole piece has detailed niceties which almost make you forget his rhythmic liberties. As for the program, that's a matter of taste.

This new recording, Victor tells us, is the initial release in a series of similar offerings, to treat orchestral and concerto repertoire. If Stokowski directs the others, the series are slated for a big success. —P.G.

**MOZART:** *Symphony No. 38 in D, K.504* (Prague); *Symphony No. 41 in C, K.551* (Jupiter); **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Columbia 12" LP disc ML4313, \$4.85.

▲I DISLIKE THE WORD "definitive" as being pretentious, presumptuous and narrow-minded, but in this case it seems reasonably safe to say that you won't find a better performance of these works on LP for some time to come. They are by no means perfect. There is too much monkeying around with tempi, too many exaggerated ritards and other coy devices in the opening movements of each symphony. It would seem to me that one might become annoyed with these affectations as one lived with the disc. I may be unduly perturbed, however, for the other movements are on the whole undistorted.

The ensemble is very good indeed, the modest technical requirements of the pieces more than amply overcome by the English players. The LP clarity, tone quality and surfaces are excellent. —A.W.P.

**OFFENBACH-DORATI:** Ballet Suite from *Helen of Troy*; **Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Antal Dorati**. RCA Victor 10" LP LM(X)22, \$3.85.

▲HELEN OF TROY has always seemed to me an effective, crowd-pleasing romp and a rather low-grade farce. I have similar feelings about Dorati's arrangement of the Offenbach music that is used for the ballet. It too is efficient and gayly gaudy, but its sound is on the coarse side and its general feeling a trifle too vulgar for it to pass muster.

Without the accompanying stage action, the music appears even weaker than usual, even though Dorati makes it sound as well as it can be made to sound. Speaking of Dorati, it would seem that he is a highly skilled drill master if nothing else. The Min-



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neapolis Orchestra plays with the same spirit and discipline that it had under Mitropoulos and that the Dallas Orchestra had before Dorati left it. —C.J.L.

**RAVEL:** *Bolero*; **Brussels Radio Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Franz André**. **FALLA:** *Dances from The Three Cornered Hat*; **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Clemens Krauss**. Capitol-Telefunken 10" LP disc L-8096, \$3.85.

▲THE INCREASING NUMBER of record companies distributing serious music on LP discs is a wondrous thing to behold, but there is another side of the coin. The *Bolero* side of this disc represents that side.

It has come to the point where almost every company feels obliged to issue its version of the standard musical best sellers. Thus, we have yet another *Bolero* and not an outstanding one from any point of view at that. Though André shows that he knows what the work is about and how it is made, he does not produce a performance that is any the less uninspired. His orchestra is satisfactory, but without the brilliant first desk players this piece requires. I recommend either the Munch or the latest Koussevitzky version.

For this reviewer, the *Bolero* is one of the most monotonous works ever devised in the hands of a conductor who can not muster the imaginative powers to give it variety. Moreover, a satisfactory recorded performance of the work must have top-notch engineering and not the "moderately serviceable" sort that is to be found here.

The sound of de Falla's ever charming, vigorous, and colorful dances from *The Three Cornered Hat* as it emerges from this LP is — let's face it — poor. This work, which counts so much on its variety of orchestration to give point to its melodic and rhythmic material, must have satisfactory recording if it is to be effective. Krauss's performance seems good enough, but I would still choose the Fiedler version on its merits as a performance as well as its superior recording. —C.J.L.

**SHOSTAKOVICH:** *Two Pieces for String Octet, Op. 11, No. 1*; **BARTOK:** *Rumanian Folk Dances*; **RACHMANINOFF:** *Serenade, Op. 3, No. 5*; **SHULMAN, Alan:** *A Nocturne for Strings*; **HINDEMITH:** *Pieces for String Choir, Op. 44, No. 3* and

*Lively from Five Pieces for String Orchestra, Op. 44*; **Stuyvesant Sinfonietta** conducted by **Sylvan Shulman**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2121, \$3.85.

▲FOR STRING ORCHESTRA FANS, here is a well-selected, excellently played group of short pieces. Sylvan Shulman is a talented and solid musician. His handling of the small ensemble is marked by a refreshing vigor and lack of ostentation. If the ensemble's tone is sometimes a trifle shrill and thin (maybe others can balance it better than I was able to), one can blame that on the small size of the orchestra, which is the well known Stuyvesant String Quartet, augmented, with first violinist Sylvan acting as conductor.

The Shostakovich *Octet*, once familiar through the Max Goberman reading (Timely disc 1300, withdrawn), does not wear well with the years. It gets a better performance here, however, so some may want to replace an old disc not too well recorded in its day. It is a genuine relief when the Bartok *Dance* begins. Despite the ocean-liner, dining-salon flavor there is more real guts in this music than anywhere else on the disc. The Rachmaninoff is overshadowed by the Bartok, and the piece by conductor Shulman's brother (the cellist) is conservative but expressive. The Hindemith pieces (previously issued on disc 72606-D) sound like so many other Hindemith pieces for strings, which is to say tightly constructed, energetic, with a hint of scolding. —A.W.B.

**SIBELIUS:** *Valse triste, Op. 44*; and *Beauceuse from Incidental Music to The Tempest, Op. 109*; **Leopold Stokowski** and his **Symphony Orchestra**. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-1168, 95c.

▲STOKOWSKI, added by fine recording turns in a performance of the familiar *Valse triste* that has a beauty of sound which will appeal to many. The massed string tone is silken in quality and the whole effect is richly sensuous one. The macabre program of this piece is hardly suggested. The *Beauceuse* is far less familiar and more rewarding. It belongs to incidental music the composer wrote for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Stokowski evidently has a fondness for these pieces for he recorded them previously with the Philadelphia Orchestra on a single 12" disc. Those who favor the 45s will unquestionably wish to replace the older record; the reproduction in the new one is much better. —P.



**STAMITZ, Karl:** *Sinfonia Concertante in F major* (for Seven Solo Instruments and Orchestra); **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. Westminster LP disc 50-17, \$5.95.

▲NOT SO LONG AGO, London issued a Deutsche Grammophon recording of a symphony by Johann Stamitz, father of Karl. Johann (1717-1757) was the leader and probable founder of the Mannheim School which boasted in its day the foremost orchestra in Europe, famous for "its effective and exciting crescendo and diminuendo, its precise and powerful accents, its faint pianissimo and thundering fortissimo." Karl Stamitz (1745-1801), a violinist in the Mannheim Orchestra, was regarded in his time as a remarkable

player and composer. His works are excellently constructed, brilliant and energetic. Though they lack profundity, they are more vital and appealing than any of his father's music which I have heard to date, and in spirit and texture they are very close to Haydn.

The present opus is a display work, a combination of the concerto and the symphony. Says Nicholas Slonimsky, the annotator, "It is, indeed, a septuple concerto, with seven solo instruments (flute, oboe, clarinet, two horns, violin, and violoncello) forming a concertizing septet which is contrasted and accompanied by an orchestra consisting of strings, wood-wind instruments, and kettledrums." The first movement is the most



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elaborate. The seven solo instruments are all knowingly and effectively exploited. A cadenza in which "all seven instruments are engaged in canonic imitation" is quite exciting. Mozart did more with his *sinfonia concertante* slow movements and finales than Stamitz does, but the latter's is none the less solid and agreeable music-making, deserving of recording.

This is the sort of work that one of our modern American orchestras could perform to perfection. While the Vienna Symphony and its capable group of soloists do a satisfactory job, there is not quite the perfection of balance and polish of which a disciple of Maunheim's famous orchestra is deserving. Swoboda's orchestral direction is appropriately energetic and forthright, and the recording tonally excellent. A disc worth investigating.

—P.H.R.

**SUPPE:** *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna* — *Overture*; **J. STRAUSS:** *Morning Papers Waltz*; **PONCHIELLI:** *La Gioconda* — *Dance of the Hours*; **NICOLAI:** *The Merry Wives of Windsor* — *Overture*; **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** and the **Columbia Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Sir Thomas Beecham**. Columbia 10" LP ML2134, \$3.85.

▲ **SUPPE MUST BE RANKED** with Rossini and Weber as a master compounder of overtures. The example here is not one of his best, yet that is no censure. The Nicolai overture and the von Suppe have both been done by Beecham in past years, with Fiedler and the Boston "Pops" as his chief rival in each case. Most of us are familiar with the characteristics of each leader to know by now which temperament we prefer; furthermore, it is self-evident that the LP status of the present contestant constitutes an overwhelming advantage.

I have always thought that the *Dance of the Hours* was one of the most dreadful pot-boilers ever placed on the fire; apparently Sir Thomas is of much the same opinion, to judge by the indifferent quality of his performance. I'm just a little bit shocked that he agreed to the inclusion of this battered derelict of the Sunday band repertoire. The Strauss waltz is just another Strauss waltz, without any distinguishing characteristics. Playing and recording of all these without reproach.

—A.W.P.

**STRAUSS:** *Death and Transfiguration*; **Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra** conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**; **Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks**; **Vienna Philharmonic** conducted by **Clemens Krauss**. Capitol-Telefunken 12" LP disc P-8100.

▲ **THERE IS SOME** very fine orchestral playing on the *Till Eulenspiegel* side of this disc, cleanly and faithfully retained by the recordists. Expert handling of solo passages plus taut ensemble work, exemplified by the precise rapid unison passage in the last third of the work, is nullified by the plodding, ponderous characterization of the conductor. Herr Krauss, unfortunately, has no sense of humor and little imagination.

The other side is not so well played or recorded. One can not find much fault with Mengelberg's reading; after all, he is a past master at this sort of thing, thriving on bombast and contrast. Stokowski has laid the *schmalz* on with a smoother trowel in his day, but he, as yet, has not made this piece on LP. There is one by Ormandy (Columbia ML4044) that is better played.

—A.W.P.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Francesca da Rimini* (*Fantasia after Dante*), *Op. 32*; and **PROKOFIEFF:** *Classical Symphony*; **L'Orchestra de la Societe des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris** conducted by **Enrique Jorda** and **Charles Muench**. London LP disc LLP 169, \$5.95.

▲ **THOSE WHO ADMIRE** *Francesca da Rimini* will find this new recording the best reproduced. Its rich bass, overall clarity, and generally equitable balance place it in the frontline as a recording. Jorda's treatment of the score lacks the poetic restraint of Beecham, but his handling of the frenetic opening and closing sections is more within the bounds of good taste than the over-dramatized playing of Stokowski. The love music of the second part is expressively performed with a nice feeling for poetic nuance.

Muench's performance of the Prokofiev symphony was previously available on 78 rpm discs. The transfer to LP has been acceptably accomplished though not without some reminder of surface sound from the original recording. This is one of the best performances of Prokofiev's delightful work well detailed and nicely balanced. Muench takes the *Larghetto* slightly slower than Koussevitzky which I find in keeping with the

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Valse Triste, Op. 44 and Berceuse—Sibelius. Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra. 12-1191, \$1.25. 49-1168 (45 rpm), 95¢.

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composer's marking. While Muench keeps the rhythm vital in the outer movements, he does not quite achieve the sparkle and elegance of Koussevitzky. Only the latter seems to have remembered that, despite the composer's wit, he intended his music as an evocation of a Mozart symphony. But this is a good performance and just the kind of work that I find most acceptable after Tchaikovsky's melodramatic tone poem. —P.H.R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *The Tempest* (Symphonic Fantasy), Op. 18; **Bolshoi Theater Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Melick Pashayev**, and *Romeo and Juliet* (Vocal duet); **I. Maslennikova** (soprano) and **S. Lenieshev** (tenor) with orchestra conducted by **S. A. Samosouda**. Griffin LP disc 1002, \$5.95.

▲THE ADVENT of Jorda's fine *Francesca da Rimini* prompts me to include a review of this unjustly neglected tone poem of Tchaikovsky, though its performance and recording are far from perfect (one may find the needle jumping the grooves after several playings and the necessity of undue weight applied to the pickup). Composed four years prior to *Francesca*, *The Tempest* is assuredly the more mature work except in technical mastery. Its detailed program (after Shakespeare) is easily followed and its thematic content is adequately expressive. The score does not strive for that brilliant bravura and poetic eloquence of *Romeo and Juliet*, yet its best pages are most effective with their richly textured scoring. I can imagine an imaginative conductor, like Beecham, making this composition a compelling experience.

The duet, a setting of a translation of Act 3, Scene 5 of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, was sketched shortly before Tchaikovsky's death. Completed and scored later by S. I. Taneiev, the latter grafted some of the music of the *Overture Fantasia* onto the duet, but whether this was originally intended by the composer or not remains a controversial point. This is music which one feels might have been eventually more vitally shaped by Tchaikovsky. Taneiev has dimmed its emotional abandon and its rhapsodically lyrical qualities. I have heard the duet performed with more fervor than it is in this recording by Maria Kurenko and a tenor (whose name forsakes me) with Bernard Herrmann conducting the orchestra on that ever-interesting pro-

gram (now abandoned by Columbia) — *Invitation to Music*. The soprano here is rather colorless and the tenor, though the possessor of a fine lyric voice, makes little of his part; but perhaps this is due to the insipid orchestral playing. —P.H.R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74* ("Pathétique"); **Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra** conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P-8103, \$4.85.

▲EVEN if there were not far too many *Pathétiques* available, it would be difficult for me to understand why this record was released. It is a poor recording and shows its age. The orchestra, usually very reliable, is out of form. And Mengelberg gives almost the most distasteful reading of the work I can recall.

After the introduction in the first movement, Mengelberg changes pace within what seems like every other bar and his rhythm resembles the walk of a drunken man. In addition, there are shocking exaggerations of the dynamics that Tchaikovsky made so clear in his score. There is more of the same in lesser degree to be found in all of the other movements.

I realize that during the last thirty years there has been no tradition about playing Tchaikovsky, and that this state of things is due to wayward conductors' failure to follow the detailed directions that Tchaikovsky gave for the playing of his works. In case anyone at this late date is curious about what happens when the composer's intentions are taken into consideration, I suggest Toscanini's recording of the *Pathétique* or the Beecham version of the *Fifth Symphony*. —C.J.L.

**WAGNER:** *Tannhäuser—Overture and Venusberg Music* (with Women's Chorus); **Leopold Stokowski** and his Orchestra, and **WAGNER:** *Five Wesendonck Songs*; **Eileen Farrell** with **Leopold Stokowski** and his Orchestra. Victor LP disc LM-1066, \$5.45.

▲THOSE WHO OWN Victor set 530 of the *Tannhäuser* music, which Stokowski played with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1939, know what a musical treat awaits them in this disc. Stokowski's interpretation of the Paris version of the *Tannhäuser Overture* is one of the finest things he has done for the phonograph, and the years have not dimmed

his magic with this score. In the parlance of the young folks, it's right up his alley. Not only does he obtain a high technical finish in his performance but he achieves iridescent tonal effects, sensuous beauty of sound and a musical understanding which, in the final pages, always suggest to me that in imagination he invaded the luxurious court of Venus. That he chooses to include the voices of the women, as Wagner originally did, in the present recording strengthens the intimation. Of course, it permits him to realize a poetic effect that the brasses, which Wagner used in the Paris version of the overture, do not.

I have pointed out elsewhere that it is the sheer magic of sound that makes a Stokowski recording stand out above others. Not only does Stokowski the conductor officiate, but Stokowski the knowing technician. He tells the recording engineers what he wants. A lot of conductors know the results they wish to obtain but are unable to impart them to recording engineers. Stokowski assembles or seats his orchestra in a manner which assures the results he wishes. This seating arrangement, Virgil Thomson has pointed out, "is in adaption to orchestral uses of pipe-organ antiphony. . . This massive acoustic-architectural layout established, he proceeds to play on the whole thing with his bare fingers as if it were a solo instrument. . . producing the kind of a one-man performance" that he has in mind.

The really remarkable thing about the present recording is the fact that the orchestra assembled is not as large as the usual symphony orchestra. The string tone is not as richly full as in the old Philadelphia recording. But Stokowski's care and skill in handling an orchestra is such that he gets the best results from the ensemble. There is a more intimate quality to this performance, a refinement of sound which is only disturbed by the overly life-size production of the castanets. What I feel certain Stokowski aims for at all times is beauty of sound, and this he realizes.

The reverse side of the record is a re-release of an earlier 78 set. The youthful Eileen Farrell sings with beauty of tone but without a comprehensive perception of the text. Stokowski's feeling for these songs is most penetrating and I suspect he molded Farrell's singing as well as the shaping of the orchestral sound. The results are a balance of sounds that please the ear. —P.H.R.



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# Concerto

**BOWLES:** *Concerto for Two Pianos, Winds, and Percussion*; **Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale** (duo pianos) with Winds and Percussion conducted by **Daniel Saidenberg**. **MILHAUD:** *Carnaval à la Nouvelle-Orléans*; *Les Songes*; **Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2128, \$3.85.

▲**DELIGHTFUL** is the word that describes everything about this record. It is a pleasure to welcome Gold and Fizdale, America's best duo pianists, to records; to congratulate Columbia for issuing three unrecorded works of merit (in late summer at that) that best exhibit what these boys can do; and to compliment the engineers on a difficult job well done.

The Bowles *Concerto*, written in four movements, concerns itself principally with the registering of perceptions. Bowles, a writer as well as a composer, has travelled extensively throughout France, North Africa, South America, and the West Indies. He appears to have been much impressed by the dance rhythms of all these places as well as those he found in his native New York, for they are all in this work. Bowles' variety of rhythmic invention, indeed, seems to make this work suitable for supporting choreographic fancy. I wish someone would try.

I should like to add that the *Concerto* is splendidly made, that it sounds clean and bright, and that it is most effective in the fast sections, when it deals with primitive and jazzy ideas.

The Milhaud *Carnaval*, based on Creole and Cajun tunes, is a four movement work that gives its impressions of two gay expressions frequently used during the Mardi-Gras, a traditional costume of the carnival, and an imagined dance in a New Orleans home. Both this work and *Les Songes*, an arrangement by Milhaud for two pianos of excerpts from a Balanchine ballet written in 1933, superbly exploit "the spaciousness that two-piano scoring has at its best." —C.J.I.

**MOZART:** *Adagio in E major, K. 261*; *Rondo in C major, K. 373*; and **GLAZOUNOFF:** *Concerto in A minor, Op. 82*; **Nathan Milstein** (violin) with **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Vladimir Golschmann** (in Mozart) and by **William Steinberg** (in Glazounoff). Victor LP disc LM-1064, \$5.45 (also — Mozart only — 45 set WDM-1393 or 78 set DM-1393).

▲**THE MOZART WORKS** are not too often played. The poetic *Adagio* was a replacement for the slow movement of the *A major Violin Concerto, K. 219*, which as Einstein says "despite its tenderness and its enchanted, shimmering sonority, cannot match the simplicity and innocence of the original *Adagio*." Though Mozart told his father that he considered the original *Adagio* "too studied," I have never heard a violinist substitute this later one. The *Rondo*, like the present *Adagio*, was written for the Salzburg violinist Gaetano Brunetti, perhaps as "a substitute for the finale of a concerto by someone else" (Einstein). This is the sort of thing that Mozart could handle with ease and not forget his gift for melodic charm. Both of these pieces are welcome in recording though I do not think Milstein the ideal performer for either. His tonal purity serves the music well enough but I should have liked more nuance of line. Golschmann provides discreet accompaniments and the recording is satisfactorily handled.

The Glazounoff is a re-release of the set issued last year on 78s and later on 45s. Milstein plays this music with fine virtuosic sweep and tonal beauty, though not quite with the same elegance of manner which Heifetz did. The LP version is preferred to the others and recommended to those who like the music. —P.H.R.

**PAGANINI:** *Concerto No. 1 in D Major, Op. 6*; **Zino Francescatti** (violin) with the **Philadelphia Orchestra** conducted by **Eugene Ormandy**. **SAINT-SAËNS:** *Concerto No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 61*; **Zino Francescatti** with the **Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of New York** conducted by **Dimitri Mitropoulos**. Columbia LP ML-1315, \$4.85.

▲**ON THE BASIS** of this and his other recent records and his New York recitals of the past few years, I would say that Zino Francescatti is the best violinist performing regu-



larly on this side of the Atlantic. To your reviewer's ears, Francescatti is master of his instrument and a music maker in the highest category.

By thoroughly restudying the Paganini Concerto, Francescatti has restored it to us as an authentic piece of worthwhile music (which it is). He has done this by taking the work seriously and refusing to dramatize its quite apparent difficulties. In this recording, which is an excellent one, he gets splendid support from Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphians. The whole job is indeed high class and makes one understand why Berloiz always praised Paganini's "ingenious devices, noble and grandiose forms, and orchestral combinations" as well as his melodies "full of passionate ardor," his harmonies "always clear, simple and of great sonority," and his orchestration "brilliant and energetic without being strident."

The well-made, moderately engaging *B Minor Violin Concerto* of Saint Saens actually sounds like better music than it is in this superb performance by Francescatti, Mitropoulos and the musicians of the New York Philharmonic. Though the recording of this work is not as fine as the Paganini, it is acceptable. —C.J.L.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor*; **Conrad Hansen** (piano) and **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Willem Mengelberg**. Capitol-Telefunken LP disc P-8097, \$4.85.

▲THE USUAL PROCEDURE is reversed here: the conductor is the prima-donna, the pianist is the subservient one. Conrad Hansen, unknown to me, appears to be a pianist of the German school. He is a sober artist with a big technique, a touch of emotional reticence, a compulsion to be *punk!* Every note has to be in place, fearfully obeying every fingerstroke. Mengelberg is far less inhibited, and makes much more of the orchestral part than is customary.

The concerto sounds best in its bigger moments: the octave splashes, the rising crescendos, the brilliant passage work. In the slow movement, there is a tendency to stress the letter rather than the spirit of the music. It's all clean, exact, precise, and a little too lacking in poetry. The first movement omits a large part of the cadenza, a fact that is going to distress many listeners.

On the whole, this recording — alive in sound, with excellent balance between conductor and soloist — is as good as any version released in recent years, though it does not approach what has been the phonographic standard — the old Rubinstein-Barbirolli set. —H.C.S.

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## Chamber Music

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**BACH:** *Sonata No. 3 in C major* (for unaccompanied violin); **Adolf Busch**, and *Concerto No. 1 in D minor*; **Eugene Istomin** (piano) with the **Busch Chamber Players** conducted by **Adolf Busch**. Columbia LP disc ML-4309, \$4.85.

**BACH:** *Sonata No. 3 in C major* (for unaccompanied violin); **Ossy Renardy**. London 10" LP disc, LPS-259, \$4.95.

▲IN JUNE, Columbia issued a performance of the *C major Sonata* by Szigeti. The artist's intensified playing fascinated me in the first hearing but the stridency of tone and some uncertainty of control does not make for satisfying repeats of the performance. Of the six unaccompanied works for solo violin (three are sonatas and three are partitas), this opus has never greatly appealed to me.

Since the Szigeti release, a group of new recordings of these unaccompanied works has materialized on records, though not all have reached us to date. The most ambitious release is Mercury's of all six works played by Alexander Schneider, but there is another important one of *Sonatas, Nos. 1 and 2* played by George Enesco (Continental LP disc LP 104). The smaller companies are often remiss in sending review copies of records.

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Busch's performance of the *C major* remains one of the best things he has done for the phonograph in recent years. His tone is rich in sound and satisfying to the ear, his control generally good throughout, but the playing lacks variety of color and overall freedom of movement. Renardy's style, with its greater use of vibrato, is more immediately agreeable to the ear and his more sensuous tonal quality makes the music seem less austere. His chordal passages and double-stops lack essential forcefulness, and his control is not always as firm as it might have been. Both performances give convincing proofs of the interpretive powers of the two violinists and choice of performance will be governed by personal taste.

The Busch has the advantage of a good though not distinguished performance of the *D minor Concerto*, a re-release of a 78 rpm set (see September 1946 issue for original review) which gives two works for the price of one. The recording in both cases is excellent.

—P.H.R.

**BARTOK:** *Quartets Nos. 1 and 2* (Columbia LP disc ML 4278, \$4.85, or 78 rpm sets 882 and 883, \$5.71 each); *Quartets Nos. 3 and 4* (Columbia LP disc ML 4279, or 78 sets MX-331, \$3.33, and 884, \$4.52); *Quartets Nos. 5 and 6* (Columbia LP disc 4280, \$4.85, or 78 sets 885 and 886, \$5.71 each). Performed by the **Juilliard String Quartet**.

**▲THOUGH WE ALREADY POSSESS** first-rate performances of all six of Bartok's string quartets, it should be said that the Juilliard Quartet had done a truly phenomenal job in mastering the technical difficulties of all six works, and have been excellently recorded. Moreover, Columbia has made things economical for the purchaser by putting each quartet on one side of an LP disc. In the case of the first, second and fifth quartets, between 30 to 35 minutes of music is cut on one record side, which is microgroove with a vengeance, for the fine-lined grooves may cause trouble for some people whose LP reproducers do not track well. A discussion of the different quartets and their various performances, in relation to the Juilliard readings, will be found in Mr. Finkelstein's article on the composer, the first part of which appears in this issue.

—Ed.

**BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata in C Minor, Op. 30, No. 2*; **Max Rostal** (violin) and **Franz Osborn** (piano). London LP disc L.L.P-162, \$5.95.

**▲THIS SONATA**, one of a series of three written by Beethoven in 1802 and dedicated to Czar Alexander I of Russia, has received a lot of attention in the past couple of years. Just recently there was a Columbia performance by Szigeti and Horszowski and shortly before that renditions by Stern and Zakin and the two Menuhins.

Though I can understand the popularity of the work with the recording companies (it's one of those early "dramatic" works of Beethoven, you know), I don't think the work deserves that much attention. Why can't we have a new recording of Op. 30, No. 3, a far superior work to No. 2, it seems to me?

Rostal and Osborn perform the work effectively without the drive and the exciting phraseology of Szigeti and Horszowski and, I might add, without the scratchy sounds Szigeti produces in the first movement. The London recording is mostly good.

To fill up the second side, Rostal and Osborn have recorded Beethoven's minor but pleasant *Rondo in G Major* and Brahms's unusually pretentious and sugery *Sonatenatz*. The *Sonatenatz*, by the way, is the scherzo movement from a sonata that was jointly composed by Dietrich, Schumann, and Brahms. Both performances are satisfactory.

—C.J.L.

## Keyboard

**SCHUMANN:** *Carnaval, Op. 9*; **Frank Sheridan** (piano). Concert Hall Society 10" LP disc CHC-53, price \$3.85.

**▲I OWN TO BEING** a little disappointed in this release. Frank Sheridan is a fine, reflective artist, but this music calls less for reflection than great, big bunches of red coruscules. Of Sheridan's fine planning here, of some thoughtful playing and frequent moments of sensitivity there can be no doubt. What primarily is missing, I think, is temperament. At moments like *Chopin* or parts of the final *March*, Sheridan is, as they say, in

his element: he spins forth the melody beautifully, and his left hand is perfectly balanced. But in those sections requiring whimsy and lightness — and the *Carnaval* abounds in them — Sheridan mostly is over-deliberate, and his reluctance to use the pedal as well as he might lends a somewhat pedantic cast to his playing. I refer especially to sections like *Lettres Dansantes* and *Reconnaissance*; the latter, besides opening with a tempo that is much too slow, lacks the lightness and flexibility that should be its right.

And still, I hope that it will not be an epochal inconsistency to say that this is as good a *Carnaval* as is available. The old Myra Hess set was one of her weakest efforts, and the cold, colorless Arrau version is, to my taste, a hopeless stab at one of the most pulsating piano pieces in the literature. If nothing else, Sheridan plays with consistency and honesty, and he does handle certain sections with real poetry. Now, if somebody with Sheridan's musicianship and, say, Rubinstein's showmanship tackles the *Carnaval*, what a set we would have!

Concert Hall's recording is, technically, quite good. —H.C.S.

**VIVALDI-BACH-PHILIPP:** *Concerto in A minor*; played by Luboshutz and Nemenoff (duo-pianists). Victor set WDM-1378, two 45 rpm discs, \$2.20.

▲THIS, as played here, is a piece of music twice removed from its original. Antonio Vivaldi was the first to compose it; it was his *Concerto Grosso No. 8* in the famous set of twelve entitled *L'Estro Armonico*. Then along came Bach, who so greatly admired Vivaldi that he (Bach) transcribed for clavichord or organ nearly two dozen of his colleague's orchestral works. A few hundred years later comes Philipp, who arranges for two pianos what Bach had arranged for organ.

As these things go, Philipp's transcription is a good one, with an expected knowledgeable resource of the pianistic idiom and some honest respect for Bach's intention (more respect, indeed, than Bach probably had for Vivaldi's intentions). The best movement of the three is the first, a sturdy, masculine, muscular invention; the other two are more conventionally classic. Luboshutz and Nemenoff play with their usual aristocratic elegance, and the recording is excellent. —H.C.S.

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# Voice

**AMERICAN FOLK SONGS:** *Night-Herding Song* (arr. Coleman and Bregman) and *Every Mail Day* (Chain Gang Song) (arr. John Work); **George London** (baritone) with **Josef Blatt** (piano). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-1120, 95c.

▲**GEORGE LONDON** is a young American who has been enjoying a genuine success abroad. He has appeared once before on the Victor label (in songs by Kleinsinger and Marks) besides taking part in some of the Haydn Society performances. In these two selections he stays close to the American soil, singing in a commendably straightforward style with a fine rich and virile voice and exemplary diction. There may be a strong popular appeal in this disc, but for a gauge of London's artistic powers we must await his next release. The recording is rather shallow. —P.L.M.

**BRAHMS:** *Four Songs for Women's Chorus, Two Horns and Harp, Op. 17; Marienlieder, 7 Songs for 4-part Mixed Chorus, Op. 22; Wiener Kammerchor* and instrumentalists conducted by **Dr. Reinhold Schmid**. Westminster 12" LP WL 50-14, \$5.95.

▲The *Marienlieder* is a group of unaccompanied songs of folk-like character, the poems of which have to do with some of the traditional legends of the Virgin Mary. As a continuous set they have a tendency to become monotonous, though individually there is considerable charm to the ingenuous settings. The singing is reasonably well in tune and agreeable in tone quality.

The combination of horns, harp and women's voices is a pleasant one. Brahms' material, here again, is rather slight and his

treatment lacking in variety. The performance is adequate. Most of the prospective enjoyment, however, is lessened by the engineers' inability to capture the elusive tones of the horns with any degree of fidelity. Granted that the large number of overtones generated by the horn makes it one of the most difficult instruments to record cleanly, I still believe that with correct placement more listenable results could have been obtained. —A.W.P.

**PETER PAN:** **Jean Arthur** and **Boris Karloff** in an adaptation by **Henry Walsh** of the J. M. Barrie play, with the original Broadway cast; songs and lyrics by **Leonard Bernstein**; incidental music by **Alec Wilder**; recording direction by **Robert Lewis Shayon**. Columbia LP disc ML 4312, \$4.85.

▲**PERHAPS** more than any other child classic, *Peter Pan* is either delightful or painful in the imagination of a particular child. In my childhood, the work proved of some worth as an emetic, but whether this had anything to do with being a unique child is problematical. A child has a great deal of enthusiasm to spend, and we ought to give him value, and not rely on the probable fact that youthful charms can be remembered as such in tranquil age whether they were charming or not.

I am not alone in my failure to summon sympathy for this classic. When I invited a young girl and her brother to join me in sampling this recording, they declined on being told that it concerned some children called "Darling." A hasty judgment? I wonder. Do I hear someone exclaim, "Oh, these modern young sophisticates!"

The stage success of *Peter Pan* through the years has been largely a matter of personal successes — by Nina Boucicault, Maude Adams, Eva Le Gallienne. For the play is a star vehicle, if it is anything at all, and accordingly dependent upon such unrecordable qualities as bodily radiance, gesture, visual charm. With two popular movie stars the latest Broadway revival has proved a drawing card for old and young. The name of Karloff, suggesting appropriate shudders, and the knowledge that the personable Jean Arthur had cut her hair to make her look like the boy who wouldn't grow up, could hardly fail to assure some success. That Miss Arthur, recently left the cast suggests that

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she preferred to be grownup. It is said that the part proved too exacting, but whether spiritually or mentally we are not informed. The original songs spiking the syrup that comes from the record are quite watery, and compared to its concepts and dialogue similar writings of A. A. Milne are very heady stuff indeed. Whether all this archness is good for children, and just how many of them will find it palatable remains controversial. Peter Pan, the boy who refused to grow up, is really not in a class with Ollie, the dragon, who did.

—R.D.O.

**LEHAR:** *Der Zarewitsch*; **Helge Roswaenge** (tenor), **Anna Della Casa** (soprano), **John Hendrik** (tenor), **Leni Funk** (soprano) and the **Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra** conducted by **Victor Reinshagen**. London 12" LP LLP-219, \$5.95.

▲**THE IMPROBABLE PLOTS** and interminable sweetmeats of the classic operetta, which, to use the words of the enthusiastic annotator, "often reach their public in bowdlerized and tasteless catchpenny arrangements," are here offered in the pristine sanctity of their original investiture with the best possible singers, competent and sufficiently numerous orchestral forces, carefully recorded in the best London LP tradition.

The plot is far too complicated for any one without a master's degree in three-dimensional trigonometry to unravel, and the lack of any sort of libretto (which could very easily have been mimeographed and stuffed inside the paper cover) makes it even tougher to follow the course of the action, should any one desire to.

I find the unadulterated flavor of caramel somewhat indigestible in this large dose. There are many lovely melodies and much fine singing strung out along the apparently endless grooves of this disc. It would have been preferable to have separated the numbers with blank grooves, as is standard practice for recording music from such American shows as *South Pacific* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, so that one could count the circles and set the needle down to hear a particularly toothsome bit without wading through a lot of other stuff.

—A.W.P.

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**MENDELSSOHN:** *Das erste Veilchen*; *Die Liebende schreibt*; *Bei den Weigen*; *Der Mond*; *Frühlingslied*; **FRANZ:** *Aus meinem grossen Schmerzen*; *Vogeln wohnen?*; *Stille Sicherheit*; *Bitte*; *Liechen ist du*; *Mutter, o sing mich zur Ruh*; *Gute Nacht*; *Widmung*; **Elisabeth Schumann** (soprano) with **George Schick** at the piano. Allegro 10" LP disc AL-51, \$3.85.

▲**TO ADMIRERS OF FINE LIEDER SINGING**, this record will be a must, despite the fact that neither the wonderful artist nor her fine accompanist are given recording deserving of them. Allegro is not one of the companies that regard their recordings as worthy to send to reviewers, which is perhaps understandable. For the productions of this concern are not on a par with recordings available these days from the more progressive smaller concerns. Allegro's record material is hardly the best and its discs wear quickly; and the quality of its recorded sound is usually of the kind attributed to unresonant studios. Several artists have told me that the recordings, for the most part, are accomplished in the owner's living room.

Elisabeth Schumann's great lieder recordings, made for Victor in her prime, are mostly cut-out today. It is shameful that such a richly endowed company has allowed this to happen. Try as Victor will to duplicate fine lieder singing from singers of today, few of its modern offerings equal the worth of those made by a famous group of lieder artists, who recorded for H.M.V. and Victor in the 1930s. Mme. Schumann is no longer in her heyday, but her singing is still appealing. Some of her high notes suggest effort and there is not

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too much left of her lower voice, yet her exquisite artistry prevails.

Mendelssohn never sounded the deeper note of other great lieder composers. His choice of poetry was not of the best, though one song in the above group, *Die Liebende schreibt*, is a setting of a Goethe poem. Mendelssohn regarded the music as more important than the words. However, his songs have musical grace and charm, and the expression is always refined, never forced. It takes a singer of gentle taste and sensitivity like Mme. Schumann to make such songs live endurantly.

The songs of Robert Franz are far more important, and this small Franz recital rates as one of the choicest things Elisabeth Schumann has done for the phonograph. Philip Miller has said: The songs of Franz are duets for voice and piano — "true vocal chamber music. . . He built up a contrapuntal technique of the highest order, due in a large part to his studies of Bach and Handel, and this he applies to his piano parts. His harmonies, contrapuntally conceived are direct and simple, never forced, although frequently striking and always expressive." Three of the songs Mme. Schumann sings, *Aus meinen grossen Schmerzen, Bitte, and Gute Nacht*, are familiar to students, but no student ever penetrated their import or rendered them with such expressive warmth. It takes a finished artist to do this. And who but the finished artist could do justice to that "Hymn of Love," *Widmung*, that delicate bird song, *Voglein wohin?*, and that perfect "duet" for voice and piano, *Stille Sicherheit*. It is most regretful that no translations of the songs are included with this record.

—J.N.

**PURCELL:** *The Fairy Queen* — Excerpts; Phyllis Curtin (soprano), Eleanor Davis (mezzo-soprano), Paul Tibbets (bass), the Cambridge Festival Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Daniel Pinkham. Allegro set No. 60, two 10" LP discs, \$7.70.

▲**ALLEGRO** is to be congratulated on this release. *The Fairy Queen* is an opera with dialogue adapted by a Restoration dramatist from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Though "it is interesting but terrible to compare it with the original play," as Gustav Holst has said, it is one of Purcell's finest achievements with music that is fresh, spontaneous and delightful. Purcell had a gift of

melody that was excelled only by Mozart. Holst reminds us that in addition "there are his sense of harmony, his feeling for orchestral color, his humor, his intensity, his lyrical power." All these qualities of Purcell's artistry are found in varying degrees in this score.

The performance of selected excerpts, which we may assume were judiciously chosen, is in every way a competent one. Daniel Pinkham's contribution as first harpsichodist of the small instrumental ensemble and as conductor is appreciable, and the singers have agreeable voices. The recording was made in cooperation with the Fanny Peabody Mason Music Foundation, an organization established by Miss Mason's will to present concerts of infrequently performed new and old music. The reproduction has been satisfactorily handled, but the record surfaces are not of the smoothest. The recording was accomplished at Sanders Theatre, Harvard University, on the day before the work was presented in concert.

—J.N.

**PURCELL:** Songs — *I'll Sail upon the Dog Star; On the Brow of Richmond Hill; There's Not a Swain of the Plain; Man Is for the Woman Made; The Message; Come Unto these Yellow Sands; I Attempt from Love's Sickness to Fly; Lover's Confession* (3 songs); *The Owl Is Abroad; Arise, Ye Subterranean Winds; John Brownlee* (barytone with Virginia Harper (piano). Allegro 10" LP disc, \$3.85.

▲**WHY A GIFTED ARTIST** like John Brownlee has not been heard on records in recent years remains a mystery to me. Brownlee's musicianship and style have distinguished his work in the opera house, and these qualities serve him well in this recital of Purcell songs. He has chosen an appreciable group, the first four of which are arrangements by Benjamin Britten. Those who know and admire Purcell's songs will discover many unfamiliar ones in this group.

It is no exaggeration to say that Purcell's songs "are virtually the first *art songs* as later generations were to use the term," and that they are as fresh and tunelessly appealing as the day they were written. Many of them have endeared this most talented of English composers to posterity. A number of songs sung by Mr. Brownlee are from the composer's operas and plays— such as the now

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"immortal" *I Attempt from Love's Sickness to Fly (The Indian Queen), Come Unto these Yellow Sands* and that fine piece of dramatic writing *Arise, Ye Subterranean Waves* (both from *The Tempest*).

It is good to hear these songs sung by a resonant, manly voice like Brownlee's. He has the flexibility of vocal style to do justice to the most difficult passages and he is backed up by a first-rate accompanist. The recording may not be quite what we would like it, for the singer is too close to the microphone; but his presence and that of his accompanist are quite realistic, very much like in a small living room rather than a concert hall. One could have asked for smoother record surfaces as well as better balance in the recording, but this did not dim my pleasure in the recital.

—J.N.

#### SONGS OF LOVE BY OLD ITALIAN

**MASTERS:** *Lungi dal caro bene (Secchi); Vo' cercando in queste valli (d'Astorga); Dormi, Amori (Gagliano); Amor dormiglione (Strozzi); Jarl Norman* (tenor) with William Spada at the piano. Echo set, two 78 rpm 10" vinylite discs, \$2.75.

▲THESE "OLD AIRS" of the 16th, 17th, and 18th century belong to the days of *bel canto* singing. When expressively sung, these songs have charm and freshness.

Though he studied in Italy, the present singer reveals no special convictions regarding the poetic content of these songs and on records the alto timbre of his voice does not give the impression of a distinguishable artistic personality. Moreover, his vocal production does not permit the true *legato* style requisite to these songs.

—J.N.

## In the Popular Vein

by Enzo Archetti

▲INVASION OF THE FIELD of "serious music" by jazz musicians is a frequent enough occurrence not to warrant much comment but when the move is in the other direction, that is news. Mitchell Miller, leading oboe soloist with the CBS Symphony and rapidly gaining a world-wide reputation for his interpretation of old and new works, is the latest to make such a move. Recently appointed

Director of the Popular Records Division of Columbia Records, Inc., Mr. Miller is in charge of selecting and recording all material released on Columbia's popular label. This is not a new venture for him. Prior to this appointment, he held a similar position with Mercury Records where he earned an enviable reputation in the "pop" field, producing scores of top selling records for that company, including *Mule Train, Lucky Old Sun, and Again*. He is credited with developing the recording technique of such artists as Frankie Laine and Vic Damone.

As Reginald Kell did for London records, Miller immediately formed an orchestra with which to play his conception of popular music for Columbia. His first releases as **Mitch Miller and His Orchestra** are *Tzena, Tzena, Tzena* and *The Sleigh* (Columbia 38885); *Call Her Savage* (Columbia 38835) in which he back Herb Jeffrie's vocal; *Ride the Magic Carpet* and *Today, Tomorrow, and Forever* (Columbia 38814); and *Moon and Sand* and *The Whole World's Saying I Love You* (Columbia 38819) in which he does the same for Alan Dale.

Miller has a style which leans to the fast and exotic, with characteristics of Russian-Oriental music, and more than a suggestion of Khatchaturian. The orchestra is large, the orchestration elaborate, and a chorus plays a prominent part in all the arrangements. The oboe is evident only in *Ride the Magic Carpet* and *Moon and Sand*. Best are *Tzena, Tzena, Tzena* and *The Sleigh*. Incidentally, the latter is not Roy Anderson's but Tcherwanow's.

Burl Ives has become lately quite unpredictable. Almost in the same breath he produces things of little consequence like *My Momma Told Me* and *Got the World By the Tail*, two novelty songs with instrumental accompaniment (Columbia 38817), and *The*

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*Wayfaring Stranger* (Columbia CL-6109), a collection of folk songs which sprang from the heart and the soil. In the latter class, there is also *Hymns* (Columbia CL-6115) and *Jolie Jacqueline* (Columbia 38869) though the last is spoiled somewhat by an orchestral accompaniment. Burl Ives deserves Carl Sandburg's accolade "the mightiest ballad singer of our century" only when he sings with simple guitar accompaniment.

More or less in the same line is a record by **Dinah Shore** and **Gene Autry** singing two simple hymns as duets. They do *The Old Rugged Cross* and *In the Garden* (Columbia 38828) with simplicity and sincerity. A chorus and orchestra join them.

If you like movie organ music, then *Organ Encores* (Victor WP-284, 3-45's) and *Ken Griffin Plays the Music of Irving Berlin* (Columbia CL-6120) are for you. In the first, **Dick Liebert** of the Radio City Music Hall plays melodic favorites like *Stardust*, *Indian Love Call*, *Home On the Range* and others in his own elaborate way. **Ken Griffin**, who recently shot to fame for his records of *You Can't Be True, Dear* (two versions, one with vocal chorus by Jerry Wayne, and one with organ alone) plays eight Berlin melodies with simplicity and warmth. Technically, both collections are splendid — real accomplishments for the respective engineers.

On a single (Victor 47-3759), **Dick Liebert** tries the Hammond organ with less success. **The Three Beaus** and **A Beep** help out with *At the Roller Derby* and *The Bowling Song*. The results are as mechanical as calliope solos. On another single (Columbia 38895) **Ken Griffin** and **Jerry Wayne** try for the jackpot again with *Golden Sails* and *Why Did You Break My Heart*. They'll probably hit it again with this one. **Ken Griffin** with Hawaiian guitar is less successful on Columbia 38889 with *Josephine* and *Harbor Lights*. **Eddie Grant** on Hammond organ with rhythm section (Capitol 1127) is a different type of player. His *I Cross My Fingers* and *I Didn't Slip* are more in the cocktail bar class.

For the best in cocktail bar style, one must turn to **The Three Suns**. In *Raggin' the Scales* (Victor WP-278, 3-45's) their playing shines, even in such unlikely things as *The Glow-Worm* and *Parade of the Wooden Soldiers*. The remaining four pieces fit the pattern better. In a few singles the Trio does some

experimenting. They do the traditional *When the Saints Go Marching In* with the *Honeydreamers* in a spirited way (Victor 47-3817); **Harry Revel's Jet** with **Larry Green** in a manner which should increase its popularity (Victor 47-3834); and some Westerns with **Texas Jim Robertson** (Victor 47-3824). They should stick to their cocktail bar music.

What should have been a swell piece of jazz improvisation in the best **Red Norvo** tradition turns out to be a disappointing pair of mediocrities spoiled further by poor recording and surfaces. *Cheek To Cheek* plays consistently flat throughout its frantic and breathless 2 minutes and 38 seconds. *Time and Tide* is no better. The **Red Norvo Trio**, in this recording, consists of Red Norvo on vibes, **Tal Farlow** on guitar, and **Charles Mingus** on bass (Discovery 134).

*California Suite* by **Mel Tormé** (Capitol EDD-200, 4-12" discs) could only have been written in Hollywood. It snacks off the scenario, the screaming sound track, flashing, newsreel effects; it is sentimental, with soaring voices accompanying pretty, panoramic shots. It is an ambitious work — a cantata on a large scale, which sounds too much like **Grofé**, **Earl Robinson**, **Kleinsinger**, **Kostelanetz**, **Gould**, plus a few lesser known film writers all rolled into one. To be sure, it has humor and some nice atmospheric effects, but it's all in the Chamber-of-Commerce verbiage. (Each of its sections describes some prominent place in California.) Its most serious drawback is Tormé's voice, which unfortunately is omnipresent. Its best asset is its clarity: the chorus sings well and every word is understood. As a recording, it's tops. Capitol has outdone itself. But when all credits and debits have been totalled, the effort seems hardly worthwhile. The work should have been used as a film-track to accompany a travelogue.

Two **Baileys**, both mistresses of subtle rhythm with vocal styles as far apart as the poles, are encountered in *A Mildred Bailey Serenade* (Columbia 10" LP CL-6094) and *Pearl Bailey Entertains* (Columbia 10" LP CL-6099). **Mildred Bailey**, the "Mrs. Swing" of another day when she was "The Rockin' Chair Lady" of the *CBS Saturday Night Swing Sessions* (10 years ago) and the wife of **Mr. Swing** (**Red Norvo**), has lost none of her charm and appeal. On her LP disc has been assembled some of her best recordings, in-

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cluding several Ellington numbers of which her warmth and sensitivity make little gems. There are at least two numbers with Red Norvo, and others with Hank D'Amico. Jimmy Blake, Teddy Wilson, Andy Russo and other jazz experts taking part in various orchestras. The quality of the LP transfer hides the age of the recordings. In Pearl Bailey's art, we find a different kind of satisfaction. Hers is a more earthy art. Here is swing with a punch — robust, lusty, rowdy. Her deft combination of salty comments, sophisticated material and distinctively appealing voice fascinate. Her orchestral accompaniments are pithy (Mitchell Ayres) and the recording is topnotch.

### RECOMMENDED

**Dinner Music:** Ralph Ginsburg and His Palmer House Ensemble; Columbia CL-6125.

**Naughty Marietta** (Herbert): Earl Wrightson, Elaine Malbin, Jimmy Carroll, The Guild Choristers, and Al Goodman and his orchestra; Victor WK-22, 3-45's).

**Country Hits, No. 3:** Leon McAuliffe, Gene Autry, Little Jimmy Dickens, Johnny Hicks, Carl Smith, and Johnny Bond; Columbia HL-9016.

**The Bases Were Loaded and Sticks and Stones:** Sugar Chile Robinson, piano with rhythm; Capitol 1060.

**Bonaparte's Retreat and My Scandinavian Baby** (Victor 47-3766); **At the Jazzband Ball and I Want Gold In My Pocket** (Victor 47-3816). Both by Gene Krupa and his Chicago Jazz.

**The Scottish Samba and I Never Had A Worry In the World** (Columbia 38780); **I Still Get A Thrill and Simple Melody** (Columbia 38837). Both by Dinah Shore, with Quartet and Orchestra under Harry Zimmerman.

**Dixieland Is Here To Stay and I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate** (Columbia 38782); **Bonaparte's Retreat and Fidgety Feet** (Columbia 38891). Both by Phil Napoleon and His Memphis Five.

**Dixie Rag and Huggin' the Keys:** Armand Hug, piano with rhythm (Capitol 863.)

**Pearl House Rag and Sweethearts On Parade:** Marvin Ash and his Mason-Dixon Music (Capitol 855).

**Save Me a Boogie and Morganistic:** Marvin Johnson and his Orchestra (Capitol 857).

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**I Hadn't Anyone Till You and Comin' Thru the Rye** (Victor 47-3757); **Happy Feet and Birmingham Bounce** (Victor 47-3840); **No Other Love and I've Forgotten You** (Victor 47-3869). All by Tommy Dorsey and His Orchestra.

**These Foolish Things and Dust:** Gene Krupa and his Orchestra (Victor 47-3721).

**More Mambo Jambo and Mambo de Chattanooga:** Perez Prado and his Orchestra (Victor 47-3873).

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## LP Re-Issues

(Continued from page 14)

Europe, officiates in all three offerings, with conductor A. La Rosa Parodi directing the larger works.

The Italian basso, Cesare Siepi, is represented in an operatic recital of arias from Verdi's *I Vespri Siciliani*, Don Carlo, *Nabucco*, *Ernani*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Donizetti's *La Sonnambula*, Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and Boito's *Mefistofele* on Cetra LP disc LP 50,035. This young singer, highly regarded in Italy, has a fine voice though stylistically he does not always carry conviction in all roles. But there's some fine bass singing to be heard from this disc.

Less persuasive is Cetra's LP *Operatic Recital* by the tenor, Galliano Masini (disc 50,034). Galliano belongs to the lusty lunged tenors to whom style and text are secondary to voice. He reminds one of a bull-necked wrestler who prefers to exhibit his power rather than his skill.

To paraphrase Ben Johnson: "The luster of the diamond is invigorated by the interposition of mediocre things." Turning from Cetra's *Operatic Recital* by Masini to Columbia's *Violin Recital* by Zino Francescatti (LP disc ML 4310) is like discovering the luster of the diamond in artistry after experiencing contact with a common-place pebble. To be sure, the recital offers mostly

popular pieces of the encore variety, hardly diamonds strung together when regarded for musical worth. But the artistry of this violinist provides the luster, for he plays each piece with a technical finish and tonal polish that is all too rare. While one may abhor this type of program, one should not berate the artist. Furthermore, the selections can be had, if so desired on 78 rpm discs, even the opening number, new to records, Paganini's *I Palpiti*, is made available on a new Columbia 78 disc (73042).

Erich Leinsdorf's breezy treatment of Schumann's *Symphony No. 1* grows on one after a time. The polished version of Koussevitzky has not quite the same do-or-die spirit of youth, and as Schumann called this his "Spring Symphony," we favor Leinsdorf's performance, which enlists the services of the Cleveland Orchestra. Columbia's LP version (10" disc ML 2131) has an edge on the original 78.

Though a group of the latest RCA Victor LPs have been promised us, to date they have not materialized. This concern seems to have the feeling that its LP re-issues are fool-proof and do not need endorsement by any reviewers. But a large section of the public that does not have the time to rehear all which interests them would welcome — we feel certain — some guidance from some of us willing but over-worked record critics.

A final item, an LP re-issue of the late Georg Kulenkampff's performance of the Beethoven *Violin concerto* (formerly available on imported Telefunken discs), with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, has been issued on an LP disc by Capitol (P-8099). Kulenkampff was regarded as Germany's foremost violinist in the days before the war. His poised and tonally sensitive style is well suited to the music and the highly competent Schmidt-Isserstedt backs him up with a well balanced orchestral accompaniment. Though not a high fidelity recording, like the Szigeti-Ormandy it has rich tonal quality which rests easily on the ears. Moreover, the Berlin Philharmonic shows up the New York Philharmonic on more than one count. Kulenkampff's performance of this show piece commands critical respect, for there is less intensity and tonal shrillness in his playing than in Szigeti's. The issue is by and large a collector's item today.

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